

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

OF HENRI BERGSON

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# ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Bergson's philosophy of religion is not to be understood apart from the philosophical insights and the conception of philosophic method developed in his earlier works, written more than twenty-five years before the publication of his book on morality and religion.

Bergson believed that the work of any philosopher springs from a single fundamental insight, which he then repeats and develops in various ways. In his own case this fundamental insight is the apprehension of the distinction between time as measured and conceived and time as conscious lived duration. This is the theme of his earliest work, Time and Free Will, where the distinction leads Bergson to a denial that the concepts of the understanding can contain or account for the realities of consciousness or of movement and change. Consciousness cannot be described in terms of the succession of conscious states, and movement and change can only be apprehended by the same kind of intuition as that by which we are aware of conscious lived duration, in which the past is in some sense contained in the present.

This central intuition of the enduring active self of consciousness is further developed in the study of memory and perception in Matter and Memory. The study of memory is central to the traditional problem of the union of body and mind, and leads to a conception of brain and body as the instruments by which mind and memory are limited, concentrated, and made present to the world.

In various essays, and in the book Creative Evolution, the distinction between intelligence and intuition suggested by duration is worked out. The concepts and language of the intelligence can only apprehend a reality in terms of universals, or general ideas, an intuition is necessary to grasp a reality as it is in itself, by a kind of sympathy with it. All reality is continuity and change, and while the concepts of intelligence are necessary to thought and its expression, only intuition can grasp the real. This inability of intelligence to represent reality is illustrated in the study of the phenomena of life in Creative Evolution, which suggests a vision of reality as a whole as a manifestation of a vital creative impetus.

Bergson's "vitalist" cosmology is suggested rather than worked out as a metaphysical system, and the thesis suggests that it is not necessary to interpret Bergson in a vitalist sense. The characteristics of life or the vital impetus are indicative of the activity of the knowing mind in apprehending the reality of life, and are a further characterization of the method of intuition.

It is in the context of following out the implications of the "discovery" of duration and in the development of the method of intuition that the problem of ethics and religion arose for Bergson. This study is undertaken in order to complete his account of immediate experience by the examination of specifically human, social, experience, but the terms in which Bergson set himself the problem determine to a large extent the nature of his answer to it. His distinctions between closed and open morality and static and dynamic religion are valuable in showing the social realities which underlie moral obligation and religious rites and beliefs, and also in indicating the dynamic role of religion in social change. Bergson is less successful in his examination of religious experience as such, in which mysticism is given a central place. Mystical experience is interpreted as the fullest expression of the creative intuition of life, but in such a manner as to offer no clear criteria for/..

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for distinguishing the object of religious experience from the world or life itself. Bergson does not distinguish between metaphysical intuition and specifically religious experience largely because of his failure to move beyond the organic categories of Creative Evolution to an appreciation of the nature of distinctively personal experience.

Bergson's chief value for the philosophy of religion is in his method of description of immediate experience. His basic intuition of duration yields an insight into the nature of life and mind as essentially creative which is of permanent interest for epistemology and the interpretation of religion, and his distinction between intelligence and intuition emphasizes the role of imagination in metaphysical and theological statement.

## C O N T E N T S

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract . . . . .	iii.
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
I TIME, MOTION, AND CHANGE	
I.1 Introduction . . . . .	12
I.2 The Measurement of Mental States . . . . .	15
I.3 Time and Duration . . . . .	23
I.4 Free Will . . . . .	29
II.1 Criticisms of Bergson's Position . . . . .	34
II.2 The Implications of "Duration" . . . . .	54
II MEMORY AND PERCEPTION	
I.1 The Self in the World. . . . .	60
I.2 Perception . . . . .	65
I.3 The Meaning of "Pure" Perception . . . . .	71
I.4 The Stand-Point of Action . . . . .	78
II.1 The Two Forms of Memory . . . . .	80
II.2 Pure Memory . . . . .	94
III.1 Body and Mind . . . . .	104
III.2 Tension and Extensity . . . . .	111
IV Conclusion	
IV.1 The Embodied Mind . . . . .	115
IV.2 Memory and Perception . . . . .	119
III INTELLIGENCE AND INTUITION	
I.1 The Genesis of the Idea of Intuition . . . . .	130
I.2 The Intuition of Life . . . . .	142
I.3 The Analogy of Instinct . . . . .	150
I.4 The Object of Intuition . . . . .	163
I.5 The Expression of Intuition . . . . .	176
II.1 Recognition of Life . . . . .	185
II.2 The Knower and the Known . . . . .	198
II.3 Groundwork of a Theory of Knowledge . . . . .	207
II.4 Metaphysical Knowledge . . . . .	224

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
IV	CLOSED AND OPEN MORALITY	
	I.1 Introduction . . . . .	236
	I.2 Moral Obligation . . . . .	237
	I.3 Two Sources of Morality . . . . .	244
	I.4 Morality of Aspiration . . . . .	247
	I.5 Morality and Life . . . . .	255
	II.1 The Meaning of Social Morality . . . . .	257
	II.2 Saints and Heroes . . . . .	261
	II.3 The Moral Life . . . . .	262
	III.1 The Generative Principle of Life . . . . .	266
	IV.1 Love as the Meaning of Life . . . . .	274
V	THE INTERPRETATION OF RELIGION	
	I.1 The Social Roots of Religion . . . . .	284
	II.1 The Significance of Static Religion . . . . .	295
	III.1 The Contribution of Mysticism . . . . .	304
	IV.1 Mysticism and Human Life . . . . .	319
	V.1 The Union of the Static and Dynamic . . . . .	331
	V.2 God and Man . . . . .	337
VI	CONCLUSION	
	I.1 Introduction . . . . .	357
	I.2 Religious Language as Expressive of Con- viction . . . . .	359
	I.3 Religion as "Total Interpretation" . . . . .	361
	I.4 Meaning and Verification . . . . .	366
	I.5 Models and Images . . . . .	369
	I.6 Conclusion . . . . .	381

APPENDIX I - Notes

APPENDIX II - Bibliography

A B S T R A C T

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## INTRODUCTION

Henri Bergson was born in Paris on the 18th October 1859.<sup>1</sup> An ardent patriot and a master of the French language who was awarded the Nobel prize for Literature,<sup>2</sup> Bergson was a Frenchman almost by accident. His father, Michael Bergson, a composer and teacher of music, was born in Warsaw of a family of Jews who numbered among their ancestors several "Hassidim".<sup>3</sup> Michael Bergson lived and taught successively in Germany, Italy and France, where he married the Englishwoman who bore him seven children, then after a sojourn in Switzerland and in France for a second time, the family settled finally in London.

Henri Bergson, the second son, was born during the first years the family spent in Paris, and later, after the years in Switzerland, was left alone in France to continue his schooling when the family finally moved to England. After a brilliant career at school and at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, where Jean Jaurès and Emile Durkheim were among his contemporaries, he entered upon a teaching career, having chosen French nationality on reaching his majority.

Bergson's teaching career divides naturally into two parts of almost exactly equal length. From 1881 until 1897 he taught philosophy to the senior classes of several different schools. He spent two years in Angers, five in Clermont-Ferrand, during which time he was writing his first major work, the Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience (Time and Free Will). In 1888 he moved to Paris, and in the following year the Essai was published. Bergson continued to teach in various schools in Paris until 1897. His second work, Matter and Memory, was published in 1896. It is an indication of the thoroughness of Bergson's preparation of anything he intended for publication that he is said to have spent seven years in reading the entire literature on/.

on aphasia then existing in French, English and German before the publication of that book.<sup>4</sup>

In 1897 Bergson finally left school-teaching and there began his association with the Collège de France which was to bring him, and the Collège itself, such unprecedented popular fame. The Collège de France is not primarily a teaching institution. Those appointed to chairs in it were then required to give two lectures each week, but this was the total of their teaching duties. The lectures are traditionally open to the general public as well as students of the Sorbonne, the Collège sets no examinations, offers no degrees, so that its professors are virtually free to spend all their time in original research. Bergson first taught there as a substitute for Lévêque, of the chair of Ancient Philosophy, when, according to traditional usage, Lévêque was allowed to nominate a substitute for a year.<sup>5</sup> After lecturing in the Ecole Normale Supérieure for two years Bergson was finally appointed to Lévêque's chair on the death of the latter in 1900. Four years later, at his own request, he was transferred to the chair of Modern Philosophy, which he occupied until 1921, although he did no teaching after the year 1914. Edouard Le Roy, his disciple and eventual successor, was his permanent substitute, by a special arrangement, from 1914 until 1921.

It was during his years at the Collège de France that Bergson rose to the height of his fame. Particularly after the publication of his best-known work, Creative Evolution, in 1907, crowds of as many as seven hundred people crammed into his lecture-room which seated less than three hundred. These were not only students - many ladies of fashion were in the habit of sending their grooms to sit through earlier lectures in the same hall to reserve seats for Bergson's course. After/..



After Bergson's election to the Académie Française in 1914, crowds became so dense, with scuffling at the doors and windows, that there were proposals that Bergson should lecture in the amphitheatre of the Sorbonne or even in the Opéra.

During this time Bergson also became well-known abroad.<sup>6</sup> He lectured in Britain and in the United States, giving in 1914 the first series of Gifford Lectures in the University of Edinburgh on the 'Problems of Personality'. The second series of these lectures was never given owing to the outbreak of war, and the first lectures were not published.<sup>7</sup>

During the Great War of 1914-18, Bergson's patriotic fervour led him to write of the 'crusade' of France in a manner which even his most fervent admirers later found acutely embarrassing.<sup>8</sup> This was not his only contribution to his country's cause. He was sent on three diplomatic missions. The first was to Spain in 1916, in an abortive attempt to bring Spain into the war, and the second to the United States in 1918, when Bergson was sent alone to do what he could to persuade President Wilson to declare war on Germany. Bergson saw the President once, and had an extended series of interviews with his close advisers. Secretary Franklin Lane remarked to him after the declaration of war in April 1918 that Bergson had "counted for more than he knew" in the President's decision. The third mission was also to the United States, when in the crisis of the German offensive before the second battle of the Marne, the French government were urging the Americans to open a 'second front' by sending troops to Siberia. This unlikely project was abandoned after the checking of the German offensive in the west.<sup>9</sup>

Bergson gave further public service as a member of the Conseil Supérieur de l'Instruction Publique from 1919 to 1925, where he was much involved in the vexed question of the reform of secondary education as a principal spokesman of the 'extremist classical' party, which advocated a single classically based curriculum for all lycée pupils, with no specialization before the final year.<sup>10</sup> Bergson was also one of the twelve academics of international reputation chosen by the League of Nations in 1921 to form the International Commission for Intellectual Co-operation, the fore-runner of U.N.E.S.C.O. At the first meeting of the Commission in 1922, Bergson was unanimously elected president, and he held this office until the first attacks of the rheumatism which was to make him a semi-invalid until his death forced him to give up all work other than his philosophical research in 1925. In presiding over the meetings of the Commission, Bergson gave evidence again not only of his intellectual power, but of his diplomatic skill and tact. It was remarked after his resignation that all decisions of the Commission during his presidency had been unanimous. The rather negative record of achievement of the Commission however was greatly disappointing to him, and it has been surmised that "the whole work of Morality and Religion, with its religious accent, could in large measure be explained by the disappointments felt at Geneva."<sup>11</sup>

These disappointments, allied to his illness and his naturally reserved disposition, may certainly help to account for Bergson's increasing isolation from the world in the last years of his life, but he had in fact been considering the questions of religion and morality for a number of years.<sup>12</sup> His conclusions were published in his last major work, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, in 1932. Bergson was born of a Jewish family, and his father was actively concerned/..

concerned to "renew Israelite worship" by the settings he composed for psalms and hymns<sup>13</sup>, but Bergson does not seem to have practised his ancestral faith after his schooldays. He refused to the end of his life any overt personal religious commitment, though it is clear from the records of his conversations with friends, particularly with A.D. Sertillanges<sup>14</sup> and Jacques Chevalier,<sup>15</sup> that for years before his death he considered himself 'morally' a Catholic. In his will<sup>16</sup> he declared his 'moral adhesion' to the Catholic faith, asking that a priest say prayers at his funeral, and declaring that he "would have been converted, if I had not for years foreseen the wave of anti-Semitism which is about to break upon the world. I have wished to remain with those who to-morrow will be persecuted".

On the 4th of January 1941, at the age of eighty-one, Bergson died in occupied Paris. According to his express instruction, all of his manuscripts, notes and other papers were destroyed the day after his death.<sup>17</sup> The only exception to this rule was in the case of the manuscript of Mes Missions written in 1936. Bergson expressly forbade any publication of his letters or notes of his lectures, and any interpretation of his work except on the basis of the books he had himself seen through the press. The Bergson canon thus consists of the four major works already mentioned, Time and Free Will, Matter and Memory, Creative Evolution and Morality and Religion, with, in addition, two collections of essays, Mind-Energy, published in 1919 and Creative Mind, published in 1934. There are also two shorter works, Laughter of 1900, and Durée et Simultanéité, 1922. This last book, in which Bergson considered the relation of his idea of duration to Einstein's general theory of relativity, was never translated into English, and the author himself appears to have had second thoughts about its contents, since/..

since he refused to authorise its reprinting after 1925.<sup>18</sup> Mme Mosse-Bastide has also edited a collection of minor articles and letters which at various times during his life Bergson had published or allowed to be published.<sup>19</sup>

In his monumental study of contemporary French philosophy, I. Benrubi places Bergson in the section sub-titled 'Metaphysical and Spiritual Positivism', thus finding him a place in a current of thought which runs from Maine de Biran, the "great initiator of the method of profound introspection"<sup>20</sup> as Bergson called him, through Jules Lachelier and Felix Ravaisson<sup>21</sup>. Bergson himself warned against the misunderstanding likely to arise from the attempt to reconstitute the work of any philosopher in terms of 'influences',<sup>22</sup> but it is possible none the less to consider Bergson's work in the light of his indebtedness not only to his immediate precursors,<sup>23</sup> but also to other great figures in the history of philosophy, both those whom he criticized, like Plato, Aristotle and Kant,<sup>24</sup> and those to whom he acknowledged a debt, such as Plotinus, Spinoza and Berkeley.<sup>25</sup>

In Bergson's case in particular, however, such a method of 'situating' his work in the history of philosophy is not particularly instructive. His philosophy is more than usually polemical, not only in the sense that his views, and perhaps even more the views attributed to him, were the subject of extremely bitter attack and equally passionate defence,<sup>26</sup> but also in the sense that his whole work can be seen as a protest against one conception of philosophy and the affirmation of a different conception.

Bergson has told how his researches for his first book began from his interest in the philosophy of science.<sup>27</sup> He accepted "more or less without reserve"<sup>28</sup> the mechanistic theories of Herbert Spencer, but/..



but when he began the more detailed study of fundamental scientific notions, he was "led gradually from the mathematical and mechanistic point of view ... to the psychological point of view".<sup>29</sup> He discovered that the categories of mathematics and mechanics could not contain or describe the immediate experience of the self's duration. It was from this 'discovery' that Bergson was led in Matter and Memory to explore more fully the nature of immediate experience and eventually to elaborate the distinction between intelligence and intuition, and to speak of the method of intuition.<sup>30</sup> Intelligence is moulded on immobilities, on matter and space, intuition on movement and change, life and duration.

This kind of philosophy can be seen, in its aspect of protest, as a reaction against not only the positivism of Comte and Spencer and the empirical psychology of Taine then current,<sup>31</sup> but against a fundamental philosophical error which in Bergson's view is common, though in different forms, to Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and Kant and the moderns on the other. For metaphysics begins, Bergson says, with Zeno of Elea. It was the absurdities and contradictions he showed to be implicit in the ideas of movement and change which led Plato to seek reality beyond the changing world of appearance. Now though Kant denied the possibility of metaphysics, and restricted knowledge to the realm of the phenomenal world, he shared the error of Plato which consists in believing that the 'time' and 'movement' of Zeno is real time and movement.<sup>32</sup> It was because Kant thought that sensible intuition and consciousness operate effectively in real time, and because he realised at the same time the relativity of what is usually considered to be 'given' in sensible intuition and consciousness that he judged metaphysics to be impossible. Platonism turned from the world/..

world of sense to seek metaphysical reality in the world of Idea. Kant also saw that if there is to be knowledge of things-in-themselves it must be by an intellectual intuition and not by the dialectic of the concepts derived from sensible intuition. Kant however believed such an intellectual intuition impossible.

In Bergson's view however the important point is that Platonism and the critical anti-metaphysics are at one in believing that our 'ordinary' manner of thinking reality, particularly the reality of time and movement, is the only manner in which it can be thought. The fundamental postulate of the Critique of Pure Reason is, he says, "that our intellect is incapable of anything but Platonizing; that is of pouring all possible experience into pre-existing moulds".<sup>33</sup> It is against the "moulds" of concepts modelled upon space instead of time, immobility instead of movement, matter and not life, that Bergson's protest is directed.

Bergson's positive affirmation then is that there is another manner of apprehending reality. Beginning from the discovery that there is one reality at least which is immediately grasped, the self as conscious duration, Bergson proceeds to a theory of knowledge moulded on the real. This is not arrived at simply by generalising from the immediate experience of duration, but by the elaboration of the method of intuition, which is a kind of "intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible".<sup>34</sup> The word 'inexpressible' points to the basic problem of Bergson's philosophy, which is that of showing, by a painstaking analysis of the whole range of human experience, from the immediate intuition of the self's duration to social, moral and religious experience, how personal experience can only be grasped by the method of intuition and only expressed/..

expressed in terms of a theory of language and intelligibility derived from that method.

Bergson can thus be seen, as many of his contemporaries and successors saw him, as a liberator, whose role was to "free thought from the deceits of language and the illusions of conceptual thinking as well as from the mechanism and determinism of nineteenth-century 'scientisme'".<sup>35</sup>

This thesis however is not concerned to situate Bergson's thought with reference either to his precursors or in terms of his immediate influence, though it will be necessary in the exposition to relate him both to earlier and later philosophers. The subject of the thesis is Bergson's philosophy of religion, but what he says about religion is only to be understood in terms of his whole philosophy. He himself came to see his whole philosophical development as being a preparation for or movement towards the Catholic faith he finally accepted near the end of his life.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless Bergson claimed always to be an empiricist, and his examination of religion is the culmination of a life-time's work devoted to mapping experience and explaining its logic.

The use of these terms familiar in contemporary philosophy in English is deliberate. The present time is one of a fruitful debate between theology and the latest manifestation of the British empirical tradition in linguistic or conceptual analysis. This debate is fruitful in the double sense of encouraging theologians to re-examine certain theological concepts with a view to clearing up ambiguities and confusion, and also for philosophy in that the very idea of what constitutes 'experience' may be widened when criteria of meaning established in one area of experience, or within one 'language-game', are applied to another area of experience and may be seen to require modification./..

modification. Bergson's thought is not here translated into terms of the contemporary debate, but is rather illustrated by reference to it, in the belief that his treatment of experience and religion has something of value to offer.

Bergson's contribution to the philosophy of religion will be assessed in the concluding chapter of this study. The value of his work as a whole is in his attempt to give a comprehensive account of experience. 'Comprehensive' does not mean 'systematic'; a systematic treatment is too much to expect from one who wrote on time in a physical and psychological sense, on neurophysiology, on biology, psychology and sociology, as well as on the problems of ethics and religion. Bergson is comprehensive in the sense of following through certain basic insights and testing these in the study of such a wide range of phenomena.

Two methods immediately suggest themselves for the study of the whole work of a philosopher like Bergson. The first is the thematic method, that of considering single topics in their development and elaboration in the varied context of Bergson's books. This method has the advantage of clarity, and is also easier in the sense that it is the method followed by most of Bergson's commentators. These very points however, can be disadvantages. Bergson has suffered more than most philosophers from being summed up, and often dismissed, in a single word or phrase like 'evolutionist' or 'intuitionist', and the thematic approach lends itself too easily to the discussion of Bergsonism rather than Bergson.

The method here followed is a more or less chronological one. The first three chapters will be devoted to the exposition and criticism of the first three major works, together with some of Bergson's essays. This/..



This will show the meaning of Bergson's method of intuition as he developed it himself, and will also show how the problems of morality and religion arose for him. Chapters IV and V will expound and criticize his book on Morality and Religion, and a concluding chapter will assess the positive insights yielded by his treatment. This method, despite the disadvantage of involving some repetition, will show more clearly than the thematic method the point which will be argued in Chapter V, that in fact the terms in which Bergson set himself the problem of religion dictated in large measure his answer to it.

## CHAPTER I

### TIME, MOTION, AND CHANGE

#### I.1 - Introduction

Any account of the philosophy of Bergson must begin with a consideration of his distinction between time as it is ordinarily understood and measured by clocks or other instruments; and what he calls "la durée", or "temps vécu", which is our immediate apprehension of duration in conscious experience. Bergson himself has warned us against taking any other of his ideas - such as for instance his theory of intuition - as a starting-point for the interpretation of his work.<sup>37</sup>

Elsewhere, he has related how it was his attempt to develop some of the ideas of Herbert Spencer's First Principles which first led him to consider the problem of Time. There, Bergson says, "a surprise awaited me".<sup>38</sup> The surprise was the discovery of the distinction on which Bergson insisted throughout his work - that between time as conceived and measured and the time of our immediate apprehension of duration. The difference is that between the nature of our experience of time and that of our experience of space. It is Bergson's contention that it is our unconscious assimilation of time to space, our thinking about time in terms which are only appropriate to space, which is the source not only of philosophical puzzlement about time itself but also of our inability satisfactorily to solve other traditional philosophical problems which are not at first glance concerned with time at all.

In the Preface to his first work, the Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience, Bergson thus summarises his intentions:

"What I attempt to prove is that all discussion between the determinists and their opponents implies a previous confusion of duration with extensity, of succession with simultaneity, of quality with quantity: the confusion once dispelled, we may perhaps witness the disappearance of the objections raised against Free Will, of the definitions given of it, and in a certain sense of the problem of Free Will itself."<sup>39</sup>

Since this chapter is to be concerned with Bergson's ideas of time and duration, and the related notions of motion and change, his refutation of determinism will not be discussed in full, but some indication of the course of his arguments should be given. The first stage in the dissolution of the traditional problem of Determinism-Indeterminism is an analysis of states of consciousness and of the language we are accustomed to employ in their description. Bergson distinguishes two types of argument for determinism which he calls psychological and physical determinism. One form of physical determinism, that known sometimes as epiphenomenalism, according to which mental phenomena are mere by-products of a wholly determined physical system, in no sense determining or even influencing physical action, is not discussed in Time and Free Will and would not be affected by the arguments of that book. This theory is dealt with in the essay on Psychophysiological Parallelism. In the form of physical determinism discussed in Time and Free Will, the influence of mental state, of motive and consciousness upon physical happenings is recognised, but these psychic phenomena are in turn regarded as being determined by their total environment. Consciousness, mental states may be regarded as a form of energy and as such are subject to the universally valid law of the conservation of energy. In principle at least we could establish quantitative relations between psychic phenomena and their physical environment.

Psychological/...

Psychological determinism, while often combined with physical determinism, asserts primarily the relation of cause and effect, of necessity, between all our mental states. Our feelings, ideas, and actions are all rigidly determined by the antecedent series of our states of consciousness.

Now any form of these theories rests obviously on a certain body of empirical evidence. There can be no doubt of certain regular connections and relations between our mental states and our physical environment, and between the different mental states themselves. The determinist argument suggests that we can argue from the already given partial correspondence between the mental and the physical to a complete correspondence. Only our lack of knowledge, our lack of adequate techniques for the measurement and correlation of all the phenomena, prevent us from being able to demonstrate by prediction the truth of the determinist position. In principle however, the demonstration is possible since all is already determined.

Bergson seeks to show that both forms of the determinist argument rest upon a false assumption - namely that psychical facts, or mental states, are capable of quantitative expression. The suggestion that any given mental state could be shown to be wholly caused by a given physical stimulus, or that one mental state could be shown to depend necessarily on an antecedent mental state, would seem to assume the possibility of some form of measurement of mental states in terms of which the explanation or prediction could be given. If therefore Bergson can show that psychical facts are not in fact susceptible of quantitative expression, not measurable in terms of one another or in terms of physical fact, then he will have refuted the determinist argument, in this form at least.

## I.2 - The Measurement of Mental States

The first chapter of Time and Free Will is therefore devoted to a discussion of "The intensity of Psychic States". Ordinary language seems to indicate that the idea of quantity is in some sense applicable to mental states. We are accustomed to speak of one sensation as being greater or less in intensity than another. This is done not only in the case of sense data - e.g. a light may be said to be more or less bright than another - but even in the case of such conditions as joy, sorrow, pain etc., where there may be no physical stimulus corresponding to the light, we are accustomed to speak in terms of more or less intensity of emotion. While it is obvious that sensations and emotions have no size, this usage indicates that we normally admit them to have degree and the question arises to what extent degree of intensity is measurable.

The notion of intensive quantity is not a new one in philosophy and is discussed by Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason. Kemp Smith<sup>40</sup> shows that Kant has in mind the example of the measurement of weight to demonstrate one sense in which intensive quantity can be measured. Two different objects may be of the same extensive quantity - i.e. size, shape, cubic capacity - and yet be of different weights. This seems to suggest a measure of quantity which is not extensive. But on analysis this measurement of difference in weight is seen to be after all a measurement in terms of extensive quantity. For the relative weights of two objects of the same volume is to be determined by their relation to a third volume. Weight itself is measured in terms of extensive quantity, e.g. that objects of differing weights will balance different volumes of a third substance which is of uniform mass.

But/..

But though it is thus possible to measure one kind of intensive quantity in terms of extensive quantity, this is not a measure of the qualitative differences given in sensations. Though it is possible to arrange a series, say of shades of colour, in terms of their greater or lesser likeness to one another, when these qualitative differences are considered in themselves it is impossible to establish quantitative relations between them. No member of the series contains or is contained in any other. Kant admits this even in a passage where he appears to be suggesting the opposite:

"Every sensation, however, is capable of diminution, so that it can decrease and gradually vanish. Between reality in the (field of) appearance and negation there is therefore a continuity of many possible intermediate sensations, the difference between any two of which is always smaller than the difference between the given sensation and zero or complete negation. In other words, the real in the (field of) appearance always has a magnitude. But since its apprehension by means of mere sensation takes place in an instant and not through successive syntheses of different sensations, and therefore does not proceed from the parts to the whole, the magnitude is to be met with only in the apprehension. The real has therefore magnitude, but not extensive magnitude."<sup>41</sup>

On the one hand Kant speaks of sensation as "capable of diminution" through a "continuity of many possible intermediate sensations" till it vanishes altogether. But he admits on the other hand that "its apprehension by means of mere sensation takes place in an instant and not through successive syntheses of different sensations, and therefore does not proceed from the parts to the whole". But if an intensity is instantaneously given as a unity, how can its quantity be measured? What becomes of the intermediate sensations if they are not "parts of a whole"?

There/..



There is no need to go into all the ambiguities or obscurities of Kant's treatment of the subject of intensive quantity. A.D. Lindsay sums up the results which are of importance for the present inquiry as follows:

"measurable differences of quality, such as are implied in physics, depend upon establishing the connection between the separate qualitative differences and extensive quantity. On the other hand, qualitative differences arranged in a series by direct observation are not measurable, and the attempt to regard the difference measurable in the first way as implying any kind of summing or synthesis of differences apprehended in the second way involves a confusion."<sup>42</sup>

In the first chapter of Time and Free Will, Bergson analyses the confusion. He is not concerned to deny that we are accustomed to speak of differences between feelings and sensations of all kinds in terms of "more" or "less", nor that some at least of these experiences are associated with external stimuli which can be quantitatively measured. He wishes rather to distinguish between two notions of "intensive quantity" which are ordinarily confused, and to show that the term is properly only applicable to the relations between psychical facts and external phenomena. The confusion arises when this notion of quantitative measurement is by assimilation applied to the differences between psychical states themselves. These differences, though directly apprehended, are purely qualitative and not susceptible of any kind of measurement.

To establish this contention various kinds of psychical states are analysed. Bergson has little difficulty in showing that there are psychological states in which intensity is not measurable by reference to external phenomena. We speak of a greater or more intense joy or sorrow, we recognise degrees of desire, of aesthetic emotion/..

emotion and of what he calls moral feeling, such as pity. But though we speak of degrees of intensity in these cases, it is clear that we cannot other than metaphorically think of a lesser intensity as being contained in a greater or establish any measure of these differences of degree. Such deep feelings as joy, sorrow, pity and so on are not in fact simple elements which can be thought of as becoming more or less intense while remaining essentially the same. Each such experience is a complex one which involves more or less of the rest of our psychic life, and intensity is to be defined in terms of this increasing complexity. A great sorrow for instance, is not an emotion which leaves the rest of our mental life unaffected, the greatness or intensity of the sorrow is the "measure" in which this feeling affects the total psychological condition of the person affected.

"In this experience of intensity a psychical state is apprehended as greater the more it enters into and affects the rest of our mental life."<sup>43</sup>

But not all of the phenomena of consciousness bear as little evident relation to external phenomena or seem as little susceptible of quantitative measurement as emotions such as joy and sorrow. Another feeling which seems to present itself to immediate consciousness in terms of quantity or magnitude is that of muscular effort. Bergson draws upon the experimental work of William James<sup>44</sup> to show that the impression of increasing localised muscular effort which we have in the performance of a given task - e.g. clenching the fist with increasing force, or lifting increasingly heavy weights - is associated not with a corresponding actual increase in localised muscular contraction, but with the spreading of a complex system of muscular contraction to other parts of the body. What is felt as an increase in effort in, say, the arm, is associated with many other peripheral muscular phenomena. Bergson quotes/..

quotes from James :

"our feeling of muscular energy at work is a complex afferent sensation, which comes from contracted muscles, stretched ligaments, compressed joints, an immobilized chest, a closed glottis, a knit brow, clenched jaws, in a word, from all the points of the periphery where the effort causes an alteration."<sup>45</sup>

But the felt increase in muscular effort is not apprehended in these terms. There is a qualitative change also, in the case of the arm lifting heavy weights for example, a change from effort to fatigue to pain, so that -

"our consciousness of an increase of muscular effort is reducible to the twofold perception of a greater number of peripheral sensations, and of a qualitative change occurring in some of them."<sup>46</sup>

Thus in this case as well as in that of emotional states like joy and sorrow, Bergson is able to define increase in intensity in terms of a qualitative change in feeling and an increasing complexity.

The greater part of the first chapter of Time and Free Will, however, is given to a discussion of the intensity of sensation. The most interesting part of this section is that in which the psychophysical experiments of Delboeuf are discussed, since they would appear to refute experimentally Bergson's contention about the impossibility of direct measurement of qualitative changes in sensation. The structure of the experiment is simple :

"Delboeuf places an observer in front of three concentric rings which vary in brightness. By an ingenious arrangement he can cause each of these rings to pass through all the shades intermediate between white and black. Let us suppose that two hues of grey are simultaneously produced on two of the rings and kept unchanged; let us call them A and B. Delboeuf alters the/..

the brightness, C, of the third ring, and asks the observer to tell him whether, at a certain moment, the grey, B, appears to him equally distant from the other two. A moment comes in fact when the observer states that the contrast AB is equal to the contrast BC, so that, according to Delboeuf, a scale of luminous intensities could be constructed on which we might pass from each sensation to the following one by equal sensible contrasts: our sensations would be thus measured by one another."<sup>47</sup>

Bergson does not dispute the results of these experiments. He is even prepared to assume as a theoretical possibility that all the subjects of these experiments might agree as to what constitutes an equality of difference between contrasts AB and BC, in spite of the very considerable differences reported by the actual subjects.<sup>48</sup> He argues rather than the psychophysicists' interpretation of the results rests on a petitio principii. Ultimately the measurement of differences between sensations rests upon treating the smallest discernible differences between sensations as being the minima of sensation, and upon treating the smallest discernible differences as being equal to one another. This is the postulate of Fechner's psychophysics, and is no more than a quite arbitrary assumption, in fact the assumption of the principle which it is the business of psychophysics to verify - namely, that a given sensation is somehow an aggregate of some kind of unit of sensation. In this case the units are those minima, or smallest perceptible differences between sensations.

But as Kant points out and as Bergson is concerned to maintain, the perception of sensation is immediate, is not arrived at by counting intermediate stages. A sensation has no "parts", and the convention of attributing "quantity" to sensation does not arise from a sensation immediately apprehended, but from reflection on the perceived difference between/..

between sensations and the assimilation of this difference to a difference of extensity.

"In a word, all psychophysics is condemned by its origin to revolve in a vicious circle, for the theoretical postulate on which it rests condemns it to experimental verification, and it cannot be experimentally verified unless its postulate is first granted. The fact is that there is no point of contact between the unextended and the extended, between quality and quantity. We can interpret the one by the other, set up the one as the equivalent of the other; but sooner or later, at the beginning or at the end, we shall have to recognise the conventional character of this assimilation."<sup>49</sup>

The first chapter of Time and Free Will is thus concerned to show that there are two aspects of the notion of intensity as applied to our states of consciousness. In one of these

"the perception of intensity consists in a certain estimate of the magnitude of the cause by means of a certain quality in the effect."<sup>50</sup>

This is so in particular in the case of the simple sensations - of light, colour, heat - latterly examined. The intensity of these sensations is a quality immediately perceived in the sensation itself. Such intensity of the sensation itself, the effect, is not measurable, though the intensity of the cause, e.g. light, temperature, may be, and it is only by a convention that we attribute the measurability of the cause to the effect. Any experiment which would show that there is correspondence or at least proportionality between increased intensity in the cause and in the effect would depend on the prior assumption of measurability of the effect.

The other aspect of the notion of intensity is that in which intensity is not thought of even by a convention as a magnitude, but refers/..

refers rather to -

"the larger or smaller number of simple psychic phenomena which we conjecture to be involved in the fundamental state ... (it is) a confused perception."<sup>51</sup>

This is most obviously applicable to the experience of emotions such as anger or pity where it is evident that the emotion is fused with or compounded of a variety of "simple" phenomena - sense experience, memories, other emotions and so on. It is this confused perception, the "image of an inner multiplicity" which is the starting point for the second, and central, chapter of Time and Free Will, the examination of the idea of time and duration.

The criticism of Bergson's analysis of the phenomena of consciousness is therefore best left until after he has expounded the ideas to which this analysis is an introduction. One remark might however be appropriately made at this point - to the effect that Bergson is not here to be understood as arguing against the possibility of a scientific psychology. "Cause and effect" in his discussion of sensation are not to be equated with "stimulus and response". The "effects" which he is concerned to analyse throughout his book are in the words of his title "the immediate data of consciousness". It is these data which he wishes to show cannot be measured in terms of one another, and not the overt behavioural responses to stimuli which form the basis of experimental psychology. Even when this distinction is borne in mind however, the further question of the usefulness and legitimacy of this kind of introspective analysis arises. Proper treatment of this question would involve a full methodological discussion, and therefore is also better left until Bergson's aims and methods are examined more fully. For the present it is sufficient to note/..



note the distinction he believes himself to have established between two notions of intensity, and to see the use to which he intends to put the distinctions in his discussion of time.

### I.3 - Time and Duration

In the second chapter of Time and Free Will, Bergson uses the idea of two kinds of multiplicity for his exposition of two views of the nature of time. One of these views, and that the most familiar to us - time as measured by clocks, as we speak of it in common language - is based on an assimilation of time to space. The very idea of number, and hence of all measurement, is, he contends, dependent upon the notion of space. Number can only be thought of as a juxtaposition in space, a sum which implies the simultaneous existence of the parts. For though we may arrive at a sum by a process of counting individual units, this does not mean that the idea of the sum is nothing more than the succession in time of what has been counted.

"For though we reach a sum by taking into account a succession of different terms, yet it is necessary that each of these terms should remain when we pass to the following, and should wait, so to speak, to be added to the others."<sup>52</sup>

That is, the sum of units must be apprehended as a single whole, if only for the reason that otherwise we should not know when to stop counting.

It is true of course that normally in arithmetical calculation we do not form any clear mental image of the numbers to be added or multiplied, but it is none the less true that any clear idea of number is an idea or image of a simultaneous multiplicity. A reference to a simultaneous multiplicity implies space, for it is of the essence of space that we perceive a number of things in it at the same time.

"For/..

"For it is scarcely possible to give any other definition of space: space is what enables us to distinguish a number of identical and simultaneous sensations from one another; it is thus a principle of differentiation other than that of qualitative differentiation, and consequently it is a reality with no quality."<sup>53</sup>

This account of the spatial character of number is reinforced by a consideration of another characteristic of a sum; its infinite divisibility. By whatever method a sum has been arrived at, once given, it can be regarded as an aggregate of any kind of unit, and can be regarded as being infinitely divisible. But this is another indication of the spatial character of our mental image of the sum, since the sum can only be thus regarded if its multiplicity is apprehended in a single simultaneous apprehension. The unity of the sum, as well as the unity of any component which goes to make it up, is the unity of a simple act of the mind, which chooses to regard as a single whole a unit which is

"the sum of fractional quantities as small and as numerous as we like to imagine."<sup>54</sup>

Given Bergson's definition of space, infinite divisibility is another mark of the spatial character of number and hence of measurement.

Applied to time, this means that our measurement of and ordinary conception of time is only possible by the application to time of a spatial model. Bergson does not deny the importance or the legitimacy of this procedure for practical and scientific purposes, but he contends that this spatialising of time has been the source of serious misunderstanding. Time is represented as being a homogeneous medium like space, and moments of time are represented as being like points along a line. Now this spatial representation of time may enable one to measure time, but/..

but time as spatially represented is not the same as time as experienced, as "durée", as Bergson calls it.

What Bergson means by characterising our normal concept of time as simply a "spatial representation" becomes clearer when he goes on to expound this central notion of durée.

"Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states."<sup>55</sup>

This does not mean either complete absorption in present sensation, or forgetting all that is past - for in neither case could the ego be then said to endure - but rather the flux of experience is apprehended as a tune is apprehended, not simply as a succession of notes, but as a simple organic whole.

"Might it not be said that, even if these notes succeed one another, yet we perceive them in one another, and that their totality may be compared to a living being whose parts, although distinct, permeate one another just because they are so closely connected ...."

"We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organisation of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished from it except by abstract thought."<sup>56</sup>

This is the kind of account of duration which might be given by a being who could consciously experience time and change but who had no idea of space. We however, introduce the spatial idea and manner of representation into our experience of pure duration. Bergson frequently uses the example of hearing a melody to illustrate his exposition of duration, and the same example might be used to illustrate how duration is represented/..

represented in spatial terms. For though a melody is not simply an aggregate of musical notes, we represent it, in writing and even mentally, as divided into passages and bars, and speak of one theme or note as being before or after another. But in thus representing a melody we have in fact abstracted from it the element of time, and represented it as a series of points on a line which are simultaneously presented to perception rather as the notes of a written melody are simultaneously present, juxtaposed and external to one another, on a page of music.

"Pure duration, that which consciousness perceives, must then be reckoned among the so-called intensive magnitudes, if intensities can be called magnitudes: strictly speaking, however, it is not a quantity, and as soon as we try to measure it, we unwittingly replace it by space."<sup>57</sup>

What we call the measurement of time is in fact a counting of simultaneities, which may be perfectly valid as measurement but which gives rise to a mistake if time itself, and therefore process and change, are thought of as an aggregate of simultaneities.

Bergson's analysis distinguishes conceptually pure duration from space, though he admits that in our actual experience we cannot have one without the other. He analyses the experience of watching the movements of the hands on the dial of a clock -

"Outside of me, in space, there is never more than a single position of the hand and the pendulum, for nothing is left of the past positions. Within myself a process of organisation or interpenetration of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration. It is because I endure in this way that I picture to myself what I call the past oscillations of the pendulum at the same time as I perceive the present oscillation. Now let us withdraw for a moment the ego which thinks these so-called successive oscillations: there will never be more than a single oscillation, and indeed only a/..

a single position of the pendulum, and hence no duration. Withdraw, on the other hand, the pendulum and its oscillations; there will no longer be anything but the heterogeneous duration of the ego, without moments external to one another, without relation to number. Thus, within our ego, there is succession without mutual externality: outside the ego, in pure space, mutual externality without succession: mutual externality, since the present oscillation is radically distinct from the previous oscillation, which no longer exists; but no succession, since succession exists solely for a conscious spectator who keeps the past in mind and sets the two oscillations or their symbols side by side in an auxiliary space."<sup>58</sup>

But of course the ego can no more experience pure duration, i.e. succession with no conception of space, than it can experience pure space, simultaneous or instantaneous perception of externality without consciousness of succession. So a kind of exchange takes place in consciousness between this externality without succession and succession without externality. The moments of conscious time are organised in memory and disposed in a series on the model of the points on a line in space, so that a kind of fourth dimension of space is created which we call homogeneous time.

"Now if we try to determine the exact part played by the real and the imaginary in this very complex process this is what we find. There is a real space, without duration, in which phenomena appear and disappear simultaneously with our states of consciousness. There is a real duration, the heterogeneous moments of which permeate one another, each moment, however, can be brought into relation with a state of the external world which is contemporaneous with it, and can be separated from the other moments in consequence of this very process."<sup>59</sup>

This distinction is evident also in the analysis of the concept of motion. There are two elements in this concept, that of the space traversed/..

traversed and that of the act of traversing. It can only be of the first of these elements that we are thinking if we assert that motion is homogeneous and divisible. The space traversed in a given motion is a series of successive positions, but the act of traversing this space is a process which occupies duration and which eludes spatial representation. At whatever point in space the motion is considered, we are given only a position, or a series of successive positions. But a series of "immobilities" cannot adequately represent mobility, any more than time can be represented by a series of simultaneities. It is to this confusion between motion and the space traversed that the celebrated paradoxes of Zeno of Elea are due, in Bergson's view. The divisibility proper to a space is attributed to an act, which is essentially a unity and indivisible. Thus the "whole" act, or series of acts which is Achilles running, is reconstructed in terms of the steps taken by the tortoise; the steps of Achilles are divided conceptually in a manner only appropriate to the space covered by the steps and not to the actions themselves. Similarly with the other paradoxes, such as that of the flight of the arrow, whose path in flight is broken up into a series of points. The effect of the arbitrary attribution of the divisibility of space to the motion of the arrow is to produce the apparent paradox of an object motionless in movement.

Bergson points out that science cannot deal on these terms with time and motion except by first eliminating the essential and qualitative element, of time, duration, mobility. Duration is not defined in mechanics, but only the equality of two durations. What is measured is and can only be simultaneities, and

"the interval of duration exists only for us and on account of the interpenetration of our conscious states."<sup>60</sup>



He concludes that space alone is homogeneous, and to space alone the idea of quantitative multiplicity is really applicable.

"It also follows that there is neither duration nor even succession in space, if we give to these words the meaning in which consciousness takes them: each of the so-called successive states of the external world exists alone; their multiplicity is real only for a consciousness that can first retain them and then set them side by side by externalising them in relation to one another."<sup>61</sup>

#### I.4 - Free Will

As noted earlier, the point of Bergson's long discussion of the intensity of physical states and of the notion of time and duration is to show that the whole question of Free Will and Determinism as traditionally discussed has been wrongly posed. His intention is to dissipate the determinist arguments, and also the refutation of these, by showing that they imply a "confusion of duration with extensity, of succession with simultaneity, of quality with quantity". This he is now in a position to do in virtue of the distinction he believes himself to have established between these concepts.

He begins his discussion by accepting provisionally the terms of much traditional argument; in John Stuart Mill's words -

"To be conscious of free will must mean to be conscious, before I have decided, that I am able to decide either way."<sup>62</sup>

Bergson has little difficulty in showing the sterility of this formulation of the problem in terms of "equally possible" alternative courses of action. The symbolic representation of the dilemma would be something like a road which divides at a given point, the single road representing the previous history of self and the two arms of the fork representing/..

representing the alternative courses of action. This mechanical explanation or representation of the dynamic process of psychic activity is then substituted in the argument for the process itself, and so the argument becomes meaningless because its terms do not adequately represent the reality with which they are meant to deal.

"If the two courses were equally possible, how have we made our choice? If only one of them was possible, why did we believe ourselves free? And we do not see that both questions come back to this: Is time space?"<sup>63</sup>

For it is only past time which can be represented by a line in space, not time which is passing. If this is borne in mind then the determinist and indeterminist arguments are seen to be reduced to mere tautologies -

"That which is past is already traced out" and

"that which is not yet past is still to be traced out" ...

"All the difficulty arises from the fact that both parties picture the deliberation under the form of an oscillation in space, while it really consists in a dynamic progress in which the self and its motives, like real living beings, are in a constant state of becoming. The self, infallible when it affirms its immediate experience, feels itself free and says so; but as soon as it tries to explain its freedom to itself, it no longer perceives itself except by a kind of refraction through space. Hence a symbolism of a mechanical kind is equally incapable of proving, disproving, or illustrating free will."<sup>64</sup>

What Bergson means by the infallibility of the self's assertion of Free Will is more clearly seen in his discussion of an alternative statement of the determinist position, in terms of the possibility of prediction of future action. According to the determinist, it is possible, in principle at least, to predict with complete accuracy the behaviour/..

behaviour of a given person provided we know all the conditions under which he acts. In Bergson's example, the question is whether a philosopher, Paul, would be able to foretell with certainty the course of action to be taken by Peter who is called upon to make a seemingly free decision, given that Paul knows all the conditions under which Peter acts. Now to know all the conditions of Peter's action is first to know every detail of the past life of Peter, since nothing, however apparently insignificant, may be ignored as being without influence in the formation of the habits, attitudes, sets, inclinations of Peter. But to know Peter's history with this kind of fullness and immediacy can, in view of Bergson's analysis of the notion of intensity of psychic states, be nothing other than to have lived through Peter's experience. For according to Bergson there is no kind of scale on which the intensity of the various psychic states through which Peter has passed can be measured. The relative importance of various habits, feelings, and so on, in reaching one decision or another might perhaps be estimated after the event, but this possibility is ex hypothesi excluded since the question is whether Paul can foretell, before the event, what the decision or course of action will be. Further, in terms of Bergson's exposition of the notion of duration, it will be necessary for Paul to have lived Peter's experience up to and during the moment of his decision or embarking on his course of action. For every moment of consciousness has been shown to be unique, a feeling or perception even when repeated is a new feeling or perception simply by the fact of its being repeated, by the fact of its being added to or blended with what consciousness preserves of the earlier feeling or perception. In short, for Paul to be able to say with certainty what Peter's final act will be he must be Peter performing the act. The process of coming to know all the conditions/..

conditions of Peter's action would be for Paul the elimination of everything that distinguishes him from Peter, the process of becoming one and the same person with him.

In other words, this formulation of the problem of Free Will proves on analysis to be as meaningless as the first. The problem itself is an artificial one based on the fallacies of (a) regarding intensity as a magnitude rather than as a quality of psychic states and (b) substituting for the perceived reality of duration and dynamic progress the material symbol of the progress when it has already reached its end. In these two fallacies is involved another and more basic fallacy, the familiar one of the spatialising of time. This is the crux of the matter, for what lends support to, and indeed is the origin of, the determinist argument, is the fact that we can and do frequently "foretell" the future, for instance in the case of solar and lunar eclipses. Bergson's basic point is that the future of the material universe has no analogy to the future of a conscious being. In the case of the material universe, it is possible and permissible to represent time as space, to treat intervals of time as mathematical unities, but in the case of a conscious being this procedure is only appropriate for the past, which is already determined. The future of a conscious being on the other hand, is essentially progress, process, duration, and must be lived through. The law of causality itself, if understood as an assertion that the same causes will produce the same effects, is not applicable to psychic phenomena. This is not because of some strange exception in the order of nature but because the "same" causes can never recur to a conscious mind.

"While the external object does not bear the mark of time that has elapsed and thus, in spite of the difference of time, the physicist can again encounter identical elementary conditions, duration/..

duration is something real for the consciousness which preserves the trace of it, and we cannot speak here of identical conditions, because the same moment does not occur twice."<sup>65</sup>

Freedom then is an immediate datum of consciousness. The consciousness which knows itself in the flux of duration ipso facto knows itself free. For each moment of consciousness is unique, not just in its particularity, for any particular as such is unique, but by virtue of its place in an order of succession. That is, a given moment takes up into itself what has gone before just as a given note of a melody is other than what it is in itself because of the notes that have gone before. Thus real duration, which is the time of a conscious being, cannot be represented in spatial terms, cannot be thought of as composed of interchangeable "moments" disposed in a series like points on a line. The self's apprehension of itself in real duration is also its apprehension of its freedom.

"Freedom is the relation of the concrete self to the act which it performs. The relation is indefinable, just because we are free. For we can analyse a thing, but not a process; we can break up extensity, but not duration. Or if we persist in analysing it, we unconsciously transform the process into a thing and duration into extensity."<sup>66</sup>

Thus far Bergson takes his analysis in Time and Free Will. It is evident that this vindication of Free Will is of no value as a refutation of such a theory as that of epiphenomenalism, for Bergson's argument rests wholly on the evidence of the immediate data of consciousness, and a theory which dismissed consciousness as a negligible epiphenomenon would not be affected by it. Bergson deals with this kind of difficulty in his essay on Psycho-Physical Parallelism<sup>67</sup> and also in the first chapter of Matter and Memory. In each case his refutation of psycho-physical/..

physical parallelism is based upon the self-contradictory nature of a theory which contains mutually incompatible "Idealist" and "Realist" elements.

His argument can however be stated without reference to meta-physical theory, for basically it is the argument of Time and Free Will. Parallelism seeks to show that the phenomena of consciousness can be explained by reference to physically observable and measurable phenomena such as neural activities, in particular the activity of the brain. The postulate of parallelism is that there is an immediate one-to-one relation between changes in the nervous system and changes in consciousness. This postulate however ignores the difficulty of accounting for the articulation and connection of conscious states in spatial terms. Though a certain degree of localisation of brain function may be established, to generalise this indefinitely would seem not only to be going beyond the evidence but also to be making an assumption that the series of states of consciousness can be treated as though it were a spatial series. Bergson's whole treatment of the nature of psychic states and of duration would seem to invalidate this assumption.

This chapter however is not concerned primarily with the cogency of Bergson's refutation of determinist theories. The full implications of his view of free-will only become apparent as his whole doctrine of the nature of consciousness is developed in the study of memory and perception, intelligence and intuition. Our immediate concern in this chapter is to evaluate his positive teaching on the subject of time and duration, and the related concepts of motion and change.

## II.1 - Criticisms of Bergson's Position

The appraisal and clarification of Bergson's fundamental teaching on/..



on "duration" is perhaps best undertaken through the examination of some of the criticisms that have been made of him. Writers on Bergson have varied in their attitudes from outright rejection of all he has to say to a kind of uncritical adulation, and it is hardly necessary to examine all the kinds of criticism which have been offered.

One modern study, typical of many, is that of A.O. Lovejoy, in his book The Reason, the Understanding and Time. The main body of this book, in so far as it deals with Bergson, is devoted to an attempt to show that his epistemology, and his theory of intuition in particular, reproduces most of the elements of the thought of German idealist philosophers from Jacobi onwards, drawing a parallel in particular between Bergson and Schelling. Many of the parallels seem to be similarities of vocabulary and style rather than of actual content, but in any case we are not at the moment concerned with Bergson's theory of knowledge, or even with his theory of duration, but rather with the meaning and validity of his appeal to the sense of duration. To this question Lovejoy devoted the Appendix of his book, and his treatment there of Bergson's "durée" demonstrates at once the simplicity of this apprehension and the effort of attention which Bergson insists is necessary if it is not to be misunderstood. An unpublished letter of Bergson is first quoted in which he attempts to explain again what he means by real duration and in particular to reply to the charge of self-contradiction made by Lovejoy. This apparent self-contradiction is evident even in Bergson's reply:

"Duration is indivisible: but this nowise implies that the past and present are simultaneous. On the contrary, duration is essentially succession, only it is a succession which does not imply a 'before' and 'after' external to one another,"<sup>68</sup>

He goes on to use again the already familiar examples of the successive notes of a melody and the successive words of a phrase pronounced "all at/..

at once".

"You will become conscious that the melody progresses, that it is a movement or a change, that it is a thing which lasts, and which, consequently, is not a simultaneity; but that in this melody, the past is incorporated with (*fait corps avec*) the present, and constitutes with it an indivisible whole. It is only by an effort of reflection that, subsequently turning back upon this indivisible whole once constituted, you represent it to yourself as a simultaneity, because of its indivisibility:- which leads you to have a spatial image of it, capable of being cut up into distinct terms, decomposable into a 'before' and 'after', which then would be juxtaposed."<sup>69</sup>

It is this difference between the report of immediate experience and the subsequent activity of reflection that gives rise to the apparent self-contradiction. It seems to us self-evident that the units of a succession, whether notes of a melody, words of a sentence or anything else, must stand to one another in the relation of "before" and "after" external to one another. But this is only because the word "succession" is understood in the sense that reflection gives to it, i.e. in terms of a spatial and intellectual image.

"This translation once made, 'succession' becomes synonymous with 'distinction of a before and after', and it consequently becomes self-contradictory to speak of a succession in which before and after cannot be distinguished. But it would suffice, in order to avoid this contradiction, merely to give another name to the perception of succession in its naive and primitive form."<sup>70</sup>

In so far as Bergson has not given another name to this "naive and primitive" form of the perception of succession, he is of course guilty of at least a verbal self-contradiction, but Lovejoy thinks the matter is more serious than this. He suggests that the phenomenon which is at the root of Bergson's account of duration is the familiar one/..

one of the specious present. It is, he points out, a common-place of the psychology of perception that the notes of a melody are apprehended in some sense as a whole, even though the physical stimuli and their physiological effects are successive,

"the notes are apprehended as integrated into a Gestalt, all the elements of which are in some sense, present to consciousness at once. If it were not so, no melody would be perceived; for simply to hear a succession of separate notes is not to recognize a melody."<sup>71</sup>

But this awareness of the whole is not enough to substantiate Bergson's assertion that the separate notes cannot be said to be "before" and "after" one another. Lovejoy gives his own introspective report as a denial of Bergson's account.

"For myself, I can only say that I have never experienced a melody in which the notes had no 'distinct and numerical multiplicity', or were not apprehended as in the relation of 'before' and 'after'. I seem to myself indeed to hear each separate note, one after the other, though, while hearing each, I may be continuously aware of the total musical unit, or pattern of which it is a part ..... That Bergson's experience was really the same seems implied by his remarks that 'at any given moment the melody may come to a stop; but if it actually came to a stop we should have a different melody'. Only a sequence of which the units are experienced as before and after one another can 'come to a stop', a 'temporally indivisible' unity would have all its elements present at once, and there could be no question of stopping or not stopping".<sup>72</sup>

It seems evident that Lovejoy has misunderstood the nature of Bergson's paradoxical statement. Bergson would not of course deny the reality of the specious present. Indeed part of his point is that the time of consciousness differs from the time of events in that the time of/..

of consciousness endures in this way. The "now" of experience is not simply a division between past and present, but a time span with a definite content. Further, within this time span we are conscious of succession, the whole of the spoken sentence for example, is "present" to us and not simply the word or syllable which is being spoken "now". But in suggesting that Bergson's notion of duration is wholly derived from the phenomenon of the specious present Lovejoy seems to miss the core of the argument. Bergson's point is not just that we can be aware of the whole melody while still hearing successive notes, but that the hearing of a given note D, in a series ABCD, is not what it would be were it not for the previous notes ABC. That is, the past - that which is still within the specious present but precedes the instantaneous "now" - is not merely present to the instantaneous present but is in it. The fifth, or tenth, stroke of a clock, to use another Bergsonian example, is a qualitatively different experience for the consciousness of the listener than the first stroke, in virtue of the four or nine strokes which have gone before and which modify the perception of the fifth or tenth stroke. Now this, if true, is true not only of the specious present, but also - to continue the use of Jamesian terminology - of the "obvious past". In short, memory modifies perception.

In this sense the duration of consciousness can know no "before" and "after" external to one another, since the "before" will be "in" the "after" or will make it other than it would have been without such a "before". This is the sense of Bergson's denial that time can be rightly understood when conceived on the model of space. To think of the moments of time as being distinct units wholly external to one another as are points on a line is to miss the essence, the "timefulness", of conscious duration, whose moments melt into one another. We do of course/..

course normally think and speak of time in terms of this spatial model, without perceiving the difference between these concepts and what our actual experience is if we attend to it directly. It is for this reason that an attempt like that of Bergson to point out this discrepancy between the nature of our immediate experience and the account we give of it in thought and language seems paradoxical. In the letter to Lovejoy quoted above Bergson goes so far as to say that the difficulties in his account of duration

"are doubtless due to the fact that it is hard, if not impossible, to express in words a thing which is repugnant to the very essence of language".<sup>73</sup>

It would indeed be impossible if Bergson really meant what he says here. His account of the nature of language, concept, and symbol will be discussed more fully in a later chapter in terms of his distinction between intelligence and intuition. He refers here to what he regards as the essential function of at least some language - that of naming, and thereby giving the false impression of invariableness to our successive and several conscious states and impressions.

"In short, the word with its well defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the common, stable, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness."<sup>74</sup>

One has the impression at this point that this kind of argument, even if free from all difficulties, is beginning to prove too much, that Bergson is moving almost from the empirical ground of the nature of conscious experience to some kind of logical point about the uniqueness of any particular experience.

This passage may well serve to introduce another recent criticism of/..



of Bergson which turns on this point. This criticism - that of D.W. Hamlyn in his essay The Stream of Thought<sup>75</sup> - like that of A.O. Lovejoy, is worth quoting at length, since even though misdirected it serves to clarify what Bergson is and is not saying.

The main point of Hamlyn's article is to point to the confusion which can be generated when questions about the nature of thinking are considered in terms of what goes on in our minds, and when a phenomenological description of some aspects of thinking is taken to be an analysis of thinking in general. In the course of this article, he refers to Bergson's Time and Free Will and in particular to his theory of the uniqueness and unpredictability of "mental events", and his conclusions regarding free-will. In Hamlyn's words :

"The reasons for this conclusion are, roughly, that mental events form a developing series, such that every item, every idea, has a context, a history, which is different from that of every other. This means that there are no periodic events, no regularities; the result of which is both that there is no possibility of measuring "durée", as there is no possibility of measuring physical time, and that there is no basis for the production of laws of mental events or of predictions concerning any particular idea."<sup>76</sup>

Hamlyn's main objection to Bergson on this point is that Bergson's argument turns out in the end to be quite vacuous, no more than a platitude.

"Bergson's thesis amounts to a version of the argument that we can never predict an event which has a history with absolute certainty, and this is to repeat the traditional puzzle about induction."<sup>77</sup>

Hamlyn thus takes Bergson's point to be the logical one that no mental event - or for that matter any other event - can by definition be/..



be repeated, if this repetition be taken to mean the reproduction of the complexity of the sufficient conditions of the event. To bear the weight of his conclusion, Bergson's argument should be an empirical one about the nature of ideas, or mental events.

"His thesis would therefore be that as a fact of nature mental events do not repeat themselves, either in the mental history of one person, or interpersonally. But his argument does not substantiate this, but only that mental events are unrepeatable on an interpretation of 'mental event' which makes this a logical truth (analogous to the interpretation of 'historical event' which makes historical events necessarily unrepeatable.) . . . . if the context of a thought is written into the identification of a thought, no thoughts of mine can be identical in any sense, let alone any thoughts of mine being identical with thoughts of anyone else. It may also be true, in the same sense, that any attempt to repeat a thought necessarily results in the thinking of a new thought. This does not mean, however, that there is no sense in which ideas, in the sense of ideas of something, may repeat themselves. It is a common-place that they do. Bergson has, in fact, so sharpened the criteria for the identity of an idea that it is by definition unrepeatable in the same way as some philosophers have so sharpened the criteria of inductive inference as to make this impossible."<sup>78</sup>

If Hamlyn's interpretation of Bergson's argument were correct then it is evident that Bergson's doctrine of duration would be founded on a logical platitude. It must be admitted first, that Bergson does appear at times to be arguing in this way, for instance in his discussion of the possibility of the prediction of a free act referred to earlier, his argument that ultimately the philosopher Paul would have to be Peter performing his act before he could know with full accuracy the nature of that act, might indeed suggest that Bergson bases his argument on the logical particularity of each individual and of every mental event. Secondly/..

Secondly, it is true that Bergson does not, at least in Time and Free Will, (he does in later works) give much indication of how it is that we are in fact able to make fairly accurate predictions on many occasions of mental phenomena and human behaviour; nor does he do more than state - e.g. in the passage on the nature of language quoted above - the problem, indicated by Hamlyn in the last quotation, of what we mean when we do speak of ideas of something, ideas which are in some sense shared or repeated.

These problems however, which Bergson in any case returns to in later works, are not crucial as they would be if Hamlyn's interpretation was correct. He appears however, not to have taken the point of what Bergson is saying about duration. The argument he is criticising is not one which applies only to mental phenomena or historical events, but, as Hamlyn himself points out, it applies to any event, or, we may add, to any "thing". It is of course true that "if the context of a thought is written into the identification of a thought, no thoughts of mine can be identical in any sense". But this is so not only for thoughts but for any "thing". Even physical objects by definition exactly similar in all respects - or points on a given line - all of these are each unique at least in respect of position. Any "thing" is unique, unrepeatable in its particularity.

But this is surely not Bergson's intention. His argument is explicitly based on time, on the nature of duration. The basic apprehension which informs his whole book on time is that time is not to be conceived of rightly in terms of space, so that it can hardly be his intention merely to argue at this point that successive thoughts are unrepeatable only in the sense that successive points are unrepeatable or unique each in the particularity of its specific context. Bergson argues/..

argues rather that in the case of conscious duration a "thought" is unrepeatable because the second thought will in some sense include the first. The "before" and "after" of conscious duration, the "before" and "after" of mental events, is not the distinct and separable, "before" and "after" of events or objects in space, for the past mental event is in some sense present "in" the present one.

That Bergson does in fact base his argument on this empirical and psychological consideration rather than on the logical platitude suggested by Hamlyn is seen in his discussion of "degrees" of freedom. For if Bergson were indeed basing his refutation of determinist arguments on the unique particularity of mental events then he would seem to be committed to a radically libertarian position where it would be very hard to see what connection the particular thoughts of an individual consciousness had with one another, and indeed hard to see how to speak of an individual consciousness, since the notion of identity would be almost lost in the radical newness and freedom of particular thoughts.

Bergson realises however, that his assertion of the non-quantitative nature, and hence incommensurability, of psychical states does not prove the reality of freedom, but only disproves certain a priori determinist arguments. He is not shut up to a radically libertarian view, and is able to argue that there are in fact degrees of freedom, because his thesis does not rest simply on the unrepeatable nature of psychical states or mental events and the consequent inexplicability of our action. This is only the negative side of his argument, the positive side being that certain actions at least are only to be explained by taking into account the nature of conscious duration in which the past enters into and modifies the present. In Bergson's view, an act is free to the degree that the past, the whole consciousness, is involved in the act in the present./..

present. Bergson argues against the then current associationist psychology, that the self cannot be understood as an aggregate of sensations, thoughts, and feelings. This is to misapply a spatial model. But if these conscious states are understood in their proper context of duration

"then there is no need to associate a number of conscious states in order to rebuild the person, for the whole personality is in a single one of them, provided that we know how to choose it. And the outward manifestations of this inner state will be just what is called a free act, since the self alone will have been the author of it, and since it will express the whole of the self. Freedom, thus understood, is not absolute, as a radically libertarian philosophy would have it; it admits of degrees. For it is by no means the case that all conscious states blend with one another as rain-drops with the water of a lake. The self, in so far as it has to do with a homogeneous space, develops as a kind of surface, and on this surface independent growths may form and float."<sup>79</sup>

Free acts indeed are exceptional. Most of everyday actions and movements do in fact obey the laws of association; have much in common with reflex action. They are in some sense isolable from the whole of the rest of mental life, but only those acts are really free into which all our past life enters. These at least are the ideal limits of the freedom and determination of our actions, for there is probably no response above the purely reflex or sub-cortical level, however mechanical, which is not affected by the whole mental life in which it finds a place; and equally our freedom is also ideal for in no action perhaps is the whole of our conscious life involved. Our actions are more or less free according to the place we may assign to them on this ideal scale.

In the last resort this freedom cannot be defined.

"Freedom is the relation of concrete self to the act which it performs. This relation is indefinable just because we are free."<sup>80</sup>

Negatively, it can be shown that when an act appears to be causally determined, this is because its organised structures can be analysed retrospectively into motives and consequences acting upon one another mechanically. Or, again negatively, it can be shown that questions as to the possibility of predicting a free act are meaningless. But any attempt to define freedom positively will ensure the victory of determinism. For we can analyse a thing, but not a process; by the very act of analysis we transform the process into a thing and duration into extensity. Freedom is a fact, a datum of immediate experience which no one ever calls in question at the moment of acting.

This admission by Bergson of degrees of freedom is an important one. It not only shows, against, e.g. Hamlyn, that Bergson seeks to base his account of duration and therefore of freedom on observable facts rather than on logic, or better, on the logic of time rather than on the logic of identity; but it is also an indication of what was to be the later development of Bergson's thought on space, quantity, and determinism. It seems at first that the dichotomy established between freedom and necessity corresponds to that between reality and representation, ultimately to that between time and space. Even in Time and Free Will Bergson gives some indication of realising that his distinctions between time and space, quality and quantity, duration and extensity are too radical. In this discussion on freedom he more clearly indicates the direction of the rethinking he was to do in Matter and Memory. For the problem of freedom is the problem of action. The notions of action and of perception in turn raise the question of the relation of the knower to the known, the doer to what is acted upon, the mind-body problem, which is the central theme of Matter and Memory.

Before going on to these developments however, we shall examine another/...

another example used by Bergson to demonstrate the relevance and usefulness of his basic intuition of duration to philosophical puzzles. Thus far, we have mainly considered Bergson's denial that a spatial model can be applied to the phenomena of consciousness, that "duration" can be measured in terms of extensity. But his contention is that not only consciousness but the phenomena of motion and change are misconceived if this spatial model is applied to them.

In one of his later works he says that

"Metaphysics dates from the day when Zeno of Elea pointed out the inherent contradiction of movement and change, as our intellect represents them. To surmount these difficulties .... metaphysics was led to seek the reality of things above time, beyond what moves and what changes, and consequently outside what our senses and consciousness perceive. As a result it could be nothing but a more or less artificial arrangement of concepts, a hypotheticalal construction."<sup>81</sup>

If however philosophers take account of the immediate data of conscious experience, and thus "restore to movement its mobility, to change its fluidity, and to time its duration", we shall no longer be misled by the abstraction of the intellect and "metaphysics will then become experience itself". The full implications of Bergson's suggestion here will be examined later.

Here he uses the example of Zeno of Elea to illustrate his denial that motion and change can be understood in spatial terms. He contends that the celebrated paradoxes are basically about time, and that the apparent paradox is due to the fact that Zeno has "spatialised" time in his statement of the puzzles. The "paradox" is not so much a paradox as the demonstration of the self-contradiction involved in the procedure.

These puzzles however, continue to interest philosophers,<sup>82</sup> and perhaps/..



perhaps the best method of criticising Bergson is to compare his solution with those of some recent writers on the paradoxes of motion. The puzzle most frequently dealt with is that of Achilles and the tortoise. The problem posed by Zeno is well known.

"Achilles is in pursuit of the tortoise and before he catches him he has to reach the tortoise's starting-line, by which time the tortoise has advanced a little way ahead of the line. So Achilles has now to make up the new reduced lead and does so; but by the time he has done this, the tortoise has once again got a little further ahead. Ahead of each lead that Achilles makes up, there always remains a further, though always diminished, lead for him still to make up. So Achilles never catches the tortoise. He whittles down the distance, but never whittles it down to nothing."<sup>83</sup>

Now this contrasts evidently with our common-sense belief, based on experience, and on simple arithmetic, where speeds are known, that a fast runner following a slow one will overtake him in the end. Bergson refers frequently in his works to this and the other paradoxes of Zeno. According to him they are all due to the same fundamental error:

"it is to this confusion between motion and the space traversed that the paradoxes of the Eleatics are due; for the interval which separates two points is infinitely divisible, and if motion consisted of parts like those of the interval itself, the interval would never be crossed. But the truth is that each of Achilles steps is a simple indivisible act, and that, after a given number of these acts, Achilles will have passed the tortoise."<sup>84</sup>

"But Zeno's device is to reconstruct the movement of Achilles according to a law arbitrarily chosen .... The movement considered by Zeno would only be the movement of Achilles if we could treat the movement as we treat the interval passed through, decomposable and recomposable at will. Once you subscribe/..

subscribe to this first absurdity, all the others follow."<sup>85</sup>

For Bergson, the paradox of Achilles is typical of all Zeno's arguments -

"They all involve the confusion of movement with the space covered, or at least the conviction that one can treat movement as one treats space."<sup>86</sup>

Many philosophers have agreed that the root of the paradox is in the nature of time, and A. Ushenko, in a study of the varieties of solution which have been offered, says -

"I have not yet come across a philosophical refutation of Zeno which is not in Bergson's tradition."<sup>87</sup>

The contention however, that the paradoxes of Zeno are basically about motion or time seems at best to be only partially correct. Zeno's error has been alleged to be a logical, a physical or mathematical one; in the first part of what follows we will take up the more recent suggestion, made most clearly by Professors Lazerowitz<sup>88</sup> and Ryle,<sup>89</sup> and P.C. Jones,<sup>90</sup> that his basic error is a linguistic one.

That this is so can be shown by ignoring the context of the race and indeed the idea of motion altogether. Ryle uses various examples, for instance that of a cake being divided among a family on the principle that each child cuts off one half of what he finds on the plate.

"The first child begins with half a cake, and leaves a half, the second gets a quarter, and leaves a quarter, the third gets an eighth, and leaves an eighth, and so on. The plate never stops circulating. After each cut there remains a morsel to be bisected by the next child. Obviously the children's patience or their eyesight give out before the cake gives out. For the cake cannot give out on this principle of division"<sup>91</sup>

That is, the sum of the pieces cut off the cake will never amount to the whole cake, for there will always be a morsel left on the plate. In the/..

the same way, the sum of the leads made up by Achilles will never amount to the whole distance he has to run before he catches the tortoise.

Put more succinctly, as do Jones and Lazerowitz, an infinite geometric series has no last term and therefore has no "sum". The distance that Achilles has to run is stated in terms of a diminishing but infinite series of fractions of the distance already run. Thus if Achilles runs twice as fast as the tortoise and begins one mile behind, he has a total distance to run which is represented by the sum of the whole series  $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} \dots$ . The impossibility of completing this series is a logical and not a physical one, because completing the series would entail counting the last term, and this series has no last term. There is nothing remarkable about this characteristic of infinite series in itself, but it begins to become puzzling when such a series is used to state a distance, and we find that Achilles has an infinite distance to cover before catching the tortoise.

But this is not all. The whole point of these paradoxes, the reason why they puzzle us at all, is that they purport to show that motion, which we experience, is impossible, and that time or duration can slow down to a stop. For Zeno transfers this characteristic of an infinite mathematical series to the time series. He introduces by his statement of the problem not only the element of distance, but also that of time; since the fractions of the total course Achilles has to run are measured by the relative speeds of his movement and that of the tortoise. Thus the logical "never" in such a sentence as "the sum of  $\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{4}, \frac{1}{8}, \dots$  never amounts to unity", is transformed by Zeno's arguments into the temporal "never" of "Achilles never catches the tortoise". But this is a kind of semantic illusion, for the arithmetical proposition has nothing to say about time.

"It/..

"It itself is not a disheartening prophecy, for it is not a prophecy at all; it is just a general truth about a fraction."<sup>92</sup>

Thus the puzzle of Achilles and the tortoise is not what Bergson thought it was. The contradiction inherent in the paradox is not simply the application to time of a system of spatial measurements, for as has been shown, even if the element of time is eliminated, we are left with the absurdity of a distance that cannot be covered or even measured, or, in Ryle's example, with an apparently inexhaustible cake. Zeno's twofold error, or trick, is rather first to consider the logical impossibility of counting to infinity - large or small - as a physical impossibility; and secondly, to complicate the matter further by so stating the problem that this impossibility is made to appear a feat that ought to be possible and even certain of accomplishment.

But there is a twofold error or illusion, and this is a point not brought out explicitly by Ryle and Lazerowitz, though implied in their detection of the misuse of words like "never" in a temporal rather than logical sense. Bergson is at least partly right in pointing to the immediacy of an apprehension of duration, and hence of motion and change, as the clue to the solution or dissolution of the paradox, because it is in this sense which makes the problem so peculiarly puzzling. In the other example Ryle uses, besides that of the inexhaustible cake, to make plain the nature of Zeno's error, he assumes, or calculates by simple arithmetic, that Achilles does in fact pass the tortoise after a run of two miles. Even if the total distance is given however, it is still manifestly impossible for us to finish measuring out this distance in the manner recommended by Zeno. If we plant a marker after one mile of the course, after one and a half miles, one and three-quarters, and so on, we will still "never" reach the limit, there will always be a remainder to/..

to be bisected. Ryle curiously says that -

"Zeno in his mentions of the successive leads to be made up by Achilles, is, though surreptitiously and only by implication, referring to the total two-mile course run by Achilles in overtaking the tortoise; or in other words, his argument itself rests on the unadvertised premiss that Achilles does catch the tortoise in, say, two miles and in precisely one hour."<sup>93</sup>

This is an odd way of putting the matter, for the force of Zeno's argument lies precisely on the fact that under the conditions of this race, where there is no tape to be broken, we do not know whether Achilles will catch the tortoise until he has actually done so. For there is nothing peculiarly puzzling about Ryle's restatement of the problem in terms either of cutting cake or of measuring the finished distance. We might conceivably, if we were sufficiently lacking in mathematical knowledge, go on cutting cake or measuring diminishing fractions of the distance to be covered for long enough, and even wonder why we never came to the end of the cake or the race-course; but we could never wonder whether there was any end to the supply of cake or any end to the distance to be covered, since the dimensions of cake and race-course are given and are present to us.

The effect of the traditional formulation of the problem however is just this, to lead us to wonder whether and how there can be an end to the race, how Achilles can catch the tortoise. This is because the "moments" of time are not given to us, are not present all at once as are the points of space or the parts of a substance. The race perplexes us because we are, as Ryle himself notes, led to see it through Achilles' eyes, so that the race has the incomplete character of any action considered during its performance, and the end of the race is "uncertain" as/..



as any future event is "uncertain". While static reformulations of the problem such as those of Ryle can help us to see the fallacy involved in treating the completion of an infinite series as any kind of possibility, they also tend to obscure the further complication which arises from the nature of time. We cannot ask whether there is any end to the race or to the distance of two miles because each has its given determined limits, but we can ask whether the race will end or not precisely because it has not yet ended. Zeno's mistake, as we have seen, is to treat the incompleteness of a present act going on into the future as being like the systematic incompleteness of an infinite series. We recognise that this is not so, but though we now know that this argument purporting to show that the race cannot end is false we may still ask what positive grounds we have for believing that the race will end, and that Achilles will catch the tortoise. In other words, why is it that this story is a paradox. Why, no matter how convincing Zeno's reasoning may appear to be, how unable we are to point out any fallacy, are we still quite convinced that time, motion, change are real?

This second question, which is not answered by Ryle's kind of illustration, is Bergson's real starting point in his argument against Zeno. For it is not enough to say that simple arithmetic will convince us that the tortoise will be caught in exactly 1 hour and after 2 miles. If no fallacy can be detected in Zeno's reasoning then one method of calculation seems as good as another. Bergson says that the simplest method of solving the whole problem would have been to interrogate Achilles. This is hardly enough to end the matter, since there is a semantic illusion to be dispelled, but Bergson does in this way point to the fact which underlies, or even constitutes, the other half of the paradox, the fact of our immediate apprehension of duration and motion. For/..



For, in Bergson's terms, we know "from within", what duration and motion are, we can "insert ourselves into" an action like that of Achilles, and understand that he will say "I take a first step, then a second, and so on: finally after a certain number of steps, I take a last one by which I skip ahead of the tortoise".<sup>94</sup>

That is, we know that duration is not composed of "instants", either finite or infinite in number, which are wholly separate from one another. The moments of our conscious duration "melt into one another", and we never have difficulty in passing from one moment to another or in going beyond the infinity of instants that must apparently be passed through before anything can happen. We know too, that for instance when Achilles is one pace behind the tortoise he does not have to perform an infinity of actions in catching up; in a movement which is one indivisible act he not only makes up the tortoise's lead but passes him. In other words Bergson points out that no kind of argument, no kind of system of measurement can confound our immediate intuition or apprehension of duration, motion and change.

The other paradoxes of Zeno could be dealt with in the same way. The dichotomy is essentially the same as the Achilles one. Professor Lazerowitz<sup>95</sup> shows that the argument of the flying arrow paradox depends in the first place upon the same kind of linguistic error noted in the case of the Achilles. In this case the shift in meaning occurs in the use of words like "point" and "instant", which are sometimes used in a geometrical sense - as having only position, but not having any magnitude - and sometimes in a way which requires them to be understood as the names of units of physical length or of intervals of time.

Bergson may have failed to see the internal fallacies in Zeno's arguments about infinity. But his main argument remains unaffected by/..

by this. What he is saying is that duration, and hence motion and change must be accepted as a datum, indeed as the datum of experience, and cannot be spoken of in terms only appropriate to other things, e.g. space or number. The measurement of motion and change imply the perception of motion and change in conscious duration, that is, that motion is the primary fact and space that by which it is measured. But when this is worked out and explained, we find that this relation is reversed, that time is eliminated, and space or the permanent made the primary fact. To represent motion as a series of positions, or change as a series of static states, is to make motion and change unmeaning.

Time is of the essence of motion and change. Bergson therefore suggests that we cannot understand the phenomena other than in the way we understand duration. Our conscious experience forms a whole in which the consciousness of the past enters into the experience of the present. Duration is understood as lived through but is misrepresented when analysed into its "parts". Is it not through such experience only that we can understand motion and change and therefore the world itself in so far as it endures and changes.

## II.2 - The Implications of 'Duration'

Bergson's whole philosophy can be seen as a following out of the suggestions contained in the last paragraph of the preceding section. He himself, as noted earlier in this chapter, always spoke of the apprehension of real duration as the beginning of his philosophical development, but the notion of duration was more than just a beginning.

"This was the beginning of a series of reflections which led me, by degrees, to reject almost everything which I had accepted until then, and to change completely my point of view/..

view. I have set out in the Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience (Time and Free Will, pp. 115-120; 194-198 etc.) those considerations on scientific time, which determined my philosophical bent and with which are bound up (auxquelles se rattachent) all the reflections I have since been able to make  
 .....<sup>96</sup>

The last sentence indicates the difficulty of expounding Bergson's ideas of time and duration, motion and change. A full exposition would involve dealing with all of his books, and with almost all of his thought. Changes, or at least developments in his thought on time and duration will be noted in the chapters on Memory and Perception and on Intelligence and Intuition. In this chapter therefore, the critical examination of Bergson's ideas is designed not to demonstrate the systematic adequacy or otherwise of his thought on time, but rather to clarify his basic and positive contribution to the discussion of this topic and to show its continuing relevance.

Bergson has been frequently criticised for the sharpness of the distinction made in Time and Free Will between quality and quantity, duration and simultaneity - and the too rigid separation between time and space which underlies these. It is true that in this work the external world is treated as being in conceived space and as not having duration, thus contrasting absolutely with the internal life of duration which has no connection with space.

"Thus within our ego, there is succession without mutual externality; outside the ego, in pure space mutual externality without succession ..... There is a real space without duration, in which phenomena appear and disappear simultaneously with our state of consciousness. There is a real duration, the heterogeneous moments of which permeate one another."<sup>97</sup>

The/..

The characteristics of space on which measuring is based, and on which Bergson rests the sharp distinction he draws between space and time, are those of its simultaneity and its infinite divisibility. It is an empty homogeneous medium,

"a principle of differentiation other than that of qualitative differentiation, and consequently a reality with no quality."<sup>98</sup>

When we find however that Bergson goes on to distinguish between "the perception of extensity and the conception of space",<sup>99</sup> and to call the directions or dimensions of space differences of quality, it is hard to see what is left of "real space". If the possibility of spatial determination, the idea of relative position, is taken out of the conception of space, it would seem that space is just nothing. Bergson however seems to admit in his later works that this attempt at an absolute distinction between time and space, the homogeneous and the heterogeneous, will not serve, and in Matter and Memory and his later works space is treated no longer as a "reality with no quality" but simply as a concept, an abstraction, having "no other reality than that of a diagram or symbol"<sup>100</sup> "the symbol of fixity and of infinite divisibility".<sup>101</sup> That is, reality is seen to admit of no such clear-cut distinctions as Bergson first tried to establish. Space as an abstraction is a limiting conception, based on the possibility of ignoring qualitative differences and thus approaching the conception of pure divisibility, the purely homogeneous. As its limit this conception is equal to nothing. But the purely homogeneous can never be given in experience, nor can the heterogeneous be "the very ground of our experience" as Bergson says in Time and Free Will. For the possibility of experience, of knowledge of the external world rests on the possibility of perceiving a likeness among differences, rest among change.

Bergson's main position is not however affected by later modifications in his earlier too radical distinctions.

"For him the important question is whether we make identity and simultaneity the elements of reality and try to explain qualitative differences and change in terms of them, or whether, starting with the experiences of quality and the experience of time we can explain how we came to the conception of identity and simultaneity which quantity implies."<sup>102</sup>

It is this change of stand-point involved in "starting with the experience of quality and the experience of time" which is the point of departure, not only of Bergson's view of time, but ultimately for the whole of his thought. He insists again and again that this change of stand-point is the result simply of fixing attention upon what is immediately given in experience, of refusing to impose a conceptual framework upon the immediate data of consciousness.

"There is at least one reality which we all seize from within; by intuition and not simple analysis. It is our own person in its flowing through time, the self which endures."<sup>103</sup>

In a later chapter the content of Bergson's "intuition", and its distinction from "intelligence" will be examined. The word "intuition" is not used in Time and Free Will, and at this point we need only note its negative significance, it is the refusal to impose a conceptual or symbolic representation on what we are most immediately aware of, our own "duration".

"We do not think real time. But we live it, because life transcends intellect."<sup>104</sup>

Because it is not a concept

"it (real duration) is the clearest thing in the world: real duration is what we have always called time, but time perceived as indivisible."<sup>105</sup>

But/..

But though it may be the "clearest thing in the world", this simple intuition is not necessarily the easiest thing for everyone to grasp.

"It requires of the mind a very great effort, the breaking of many frames of reference, something like a new way of thinking (for that which is immediate is far from being that which is easiest to perceive); but once you have attained that representation and possessed it in its simple form (which must not be confused with a reconstruction by concepts), you feel obliged to shift your point of view on reality; you see that the greatest difficulties have arisen from the fact that philosophers have always put time and space on the same line; you see that the greater number of these difficulties are eased or disappear."<sup>106</sup>

The philosophical difficulties which are thus dissolved are so, according to Bergson, first of all in virtue of the negative aspect of this sense of duration. Bergson contends that all great philosophical doctrines, the whole work of all the great philosophers, consists in the reiteration and elaboration of one central intuition. In discussing the intermediary "image" between the absolute simplicity of that intuition and the complexity of the abstractions which translate it, he writes,

"What first of all characterises this image is the power of negation it possesses .... Faced with currently accepted ideas, theses which seemed evident, affirmations which had up to that time passed as scientific, it whispers into the philosopher's ear the word: 'Impossible'. Impossible even though the facts and the reasons appeared to invite you to think it possible and real and certain. Impossible because a certain experience, confused perhaps but decisive, ..... is incompatible with the facts cited and the reasons given, and because hence these facts must have been badly observed, these reasonings false .... Later (the philosopher) will be able to make changes in what he affirms; he will vary only slightly what he denies. And if he varies in his affirmations, it will still be in virtue of the power of negation immanent in intuition or in its image."<sup>107</sup>



In Bergson's case his basic apprehension of duration led first to the denial that real time is the spatialised time of physics, the denial that motion is a succession of positions succeeding and replacing one another, or that change can be interpreted as a series of changeless states. These negations have as their positive function that of directing attention to the immediate experience which enables the denial to be made. This is why, for instance, it was seen that it is not enough in the examination of the paradoxes of motion simply to show that Zeno's statement involves the trick or error of trying to count the final term of an infinite series. The positive object of Bergson's argument is to point to that immediate intuition of movement which constitutes for us one half of the paradox and which Zeno is misrepresenting. Similarly he is less concerned to refute a particular determinist theory than to point to the immediate experience in which we know ourselves free because enduring.

Apart from these denials and negations, there is little positive indication in Time and Free Will of how duration, movement and change should be thought or represented, except the images and metaphors like that of the melody, of which the notes interpenetrate as do the "states" of the enduring consciousness. Bergson did later come to assign a considerable role in the translation or expression of intuition to image and metaphor, but before he elaborated a theory of knowledge and language he turned, in Matter and Memory, to the problem of expanding the fundamental intuition of duration in the study of memory and perception.

## CHAPTER II

### MEMORY AND PERCEPTION

#### I.1 - The Self in the World

The arguments of Bergson's first published work, Time and Free Will, were necessarily largely negative. As was noted earlier<sup>108</sup> he was led to the study of the "immediate data of consciousness" not from a psychological interest, but in the course of his examination of philosophical and mechanical ideas of time. Indeed, the "real duration" which Time and Free Will affirms

"consists essentially in a critique of the idea of homogeneous time, such as is found in the work of the philosophers and mathematicians."<sup>109</sup>

But however cogent his criticism of the "spatializing" of time may be, or however valid his protest against physical or psychological determinism, many questions are raised in Time and Free Will which do not find their answer in that book. These questions centre on the problem of the nature of the self and its relation to the world. Bergson has denied that the self can be understood in terms or by techniques borrowed from the world of quantitative measurement and analysis. How then are we to describe this self, and how are we to understand its relation to the external world?

This kind of question is the subject of Bergson's second and perhaps major work, Matter and Memory. This is a restatement of the traditional mind-object problem. Though it does contain a theory of matter, this is dealt with

"only in so far as it concerns the problem .... which is the subject of this essay: the problem of the relation between soul and body."<sup>110</sup>

He maintains that though this problem has been a favourite theme of philosophy, it has in reality been very little studied. By this he means that discussion of the problem has tended to begin on the basis of one dogma or hypothesis or another, and that the facts have been interpreted - wrongly - in terms of theories which were propounded on other grounds. Bergson suggests that for any treatment of the whole theme to be useful, it must centre upon the study of a particular empirical example; and further, that

"any one who approaches, without preconceived idea and on the firm ground of facts, the classical problem of the relations of soul and body, will soon see this problem as centering upon the subject of memory, and even more particularly upon the memory of words; it is from this quarter, undoubtedly, that will come the light which will illumine the obscurer parts of the problem."<sup>111</sup>

Bergson's starting-point is the self embodied in the world. If we assume for the moment an ignorance of all philosophical theories about the external world, its reality or its ideality - then the self finds itself surrounded by what Bergson calls "images, in the vaguest sense of the word".<sup>112</sup> The word is deliberately vague, and seems to be chosen in order not to commit the argument from the outset to the use of "realist" or "idealist" terminology. An image, in this usage, is

"a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing - an existence placed half-way between the 'thing' and the 'representation'. This conception of matter is simply that of common sense .... For common sense, the object exists in itself, and, on the other hand, the object is, in itself, pictorial, as we perceive it: image it is, but a self-existing image."<sup>113</sup>

Whether or not this notion is "simply that of common sense", and whether/...

whether or not any criticism of it must assume, as Bergson suggests it must, one or other of the philosophical stand-points which he is trying to leave aside, it will be better to leave any criticism of this doctrine of images until it has been seen what it is meant to establish.

We are surrounded then, by a system of images, for if the world, or matter, is the aggregate of images presented to me, it is also evident that these images are a system. That is, they "act and react upon one another in all their elementary parts according to constant laws which I call laws of nature."<sup>114</sup> Yet within this system there is one image which is distinct from all the others, in that it is not only known from "without" by perception, but also from "within" by affective sensation. This privileged image is that of my body. It is by the body that "I" am in the world, and it is round my body that all other objects or images centre, and it is through my body that I act upon the other images which compose my world.

The body is distinct from other images not only in that "I" have privileged access to it however, but also in that it does not appear to form part of that system of action and reaction which I describe in terms of natural law. That is, though I can see clearly how the external images influence the image which I call my body, and though there may be also automatic bodily movements which are executed in response to the stimulus from without, I am also conscious of feelings, affections, representations, which are such that

"they always interpose themselves between the excitations I receive from without and the movements I am about to execute, as though they had some undefined influence on the final issues."<sup>115</sup>

My body is a centre of action.

The body is also privileged in that it is the centre of my perception of the universe. That is, that system of images which I call my perception/..

perception of the universe is conditioned by the state or position of my body. A slight movement of the latter can wholly alter the system. There is also however that system which I call the universe, consisting of the same images, but referred to one another and not to any centre in my body. These systems are the "worlds" of science and of consciousness. In terms of these -

"the question raised between idealism and realism then becomes quite clear; what are the relations which these two systems of images maintain with each other? And it is easy to see that subjective idealism consists in deriving the first system from the second, materialistic realism in deriving the second from the first."<sup>116</sup>

But neither of these theories can succeed, since each of the systems from which they attempt to derive the other is self-sufficient. On the materialistic hypothesis consciousness becomes at best an epiphenomenon,

"a mere phosphorescence which the cerebral vibrations leave behind them ... realism is thus bound to make perception an accident, and consequently a mystery."<sup>117</sup>

Conversely, for subjective idealism the "order of nature" is equally a mystery except on the arbitrary hypothesis of a pre-established harmony between things and the mind, or between sense and the understanding.

It might be argued against Bergson that neither what he calls "idealism" nor what he calls "realism" are necessarily bound to the extreme positions he sketches for them, but this in fact would not be relevant to his main point, which is that these two theoretical positions imply a common and erroneous postulate, which he formulates thus:

"perception has a wholly speculative interest; it is pure knowledge. The whole discussion turns upon the importance to be attributed/..

attributed to this knowledge as compared with scientific knowledge. The one doctrine starts from the order required by science, and sees in perception only a confused and provisional science. The other puts perception in the first place, erects it into an absolute, and then holds science to be a symbolic expression of the real. But for both parties, to perceive means above all to know."<sup>118</sup>

It is this postulate which Bergson wishes to dispute.

Evidence is adduced first of all from the functioning of external perception, not only in man, but throughout the evolutionary scale. In the case of the most rudimentary organisms, their response to external stimulation can be wholly explained in terms of physical and chemical reaction. Even when, higher in the evolutionary scale, nerve cells become diversified into a system whereby a varied response is possible to external stimulation,

"the same impression, which makes the organism aware of changes in the environment, determine it or prepare it to adapt itself to them."<sup>119</sup>

This pattern of automatic response can be traced even in the higher vertebrates, and in man, in the functioning of sub-cortical reflexes, but there is a radical distinction between this and those activities which require the intervention of the cerebral system. In the latter case, it may be that the impulse from the external stimulus excites a response, by way of the cerebral cortex, through the same motor cells which intervened in the case of reflex action.

"Now what has it gained by this round-about course, and what did it seek in the so-called sensory cells of the cerebral cortex? I do not understand, I shall never understand, that it draws thence a miraculous power changing itself into a representation of things; and moreover, I hold this hypothesis to be useless, as will shortly appear. But what I/..



I do see clearly is that the cells of the various regions of the cortex which are called sensory - cells interposed between the terminal branches of the centripetal fibres and the motor cells of the Rolandic area - allow the stimulation received to reach at will this or that motor mechanism of the spinal cord, and so to choose its effect."<sup>120</sup>

Thus to speak of a stimulus "choosing" its response might seem to be gratuitous mystery-making on Bergson's part, but the words are not to be interpreted literally. His reference to the cerebral functions of men should in fact be taken as illustrating rather than proving his basic point. This is simply that perception is to be understood in terms of action rather than in terms of knowledge. The growing complexity of the nervous system from unicellular organisms up to the higher vertebrates offers an ever wider range of possible responses to any given stimulus, until in man -

"the brain appears to us to be an instrument of analysis in regard to the movement received, and an instrument of selection in regard to the movement executed."<sup>121</sup>

But perception also is a function of this growing complexity of the nervous system, so -

"is not the growing richness of this perception likely to symbolise the wider range of indetermination left to the choice of the living being in its conduct with regard to things."<sup>122</sup>

Bergson suggests then that we begin with this indetermination as the "true principle", that we posit "centres of real action, represented by living matter"<sup>123</sup> and interpret perception in terms of them.

## I.2 - Perception

The analysis of the nature of perception begins with the introduction of/..

of the idea of "pure" perception, one which "exists in theory rather than in fact".<sup>124</sup> Ordinary perception implies not only space but time. Any concrete perception involves not only the presentation in space of the object but also a certain duration of perceiver and percept. The act of perceiving is also a kind of mental synthesis which involves elements of remembering as well as of immediate perceiving. In order, however, to understand the nature of our actual perception, it is necessary to separate in analysis the elements which could not be separated in fact.

Pure perception would be a perception devoid of all memory and of all temporal element, a "vision of matter at once immediate and instantaneous". If interpreted strictly, this would mean a kind of perception which was unconscious, which was no more than a kind of reflection of what is perceived. As "instantaneous", i.e. without any form of memory, pure perception would necessarily be unconscious, and as "immediate" would "reflect" without differentiation or selection all that was presented. It is this "purest" kind of perception that Bergson appears to have in mind when he remarks that -

"in one sense we might say that the perception of any unconscious material point whatever, in its instantaneousness, is infinitely greater and more complete than ours, since this point gathers and transmits the influences of all the points of the material universe, whereas our consciousness only attains to certain parts and to certain aspects of those parts. Consciousness - in external perception - lies in just this choice."<sup>125</sup>

Thus from the purely theoretical limiting notion of "pure perception" - in which at its limit there would seem to be no distinguishable difference between "being" and "being perceived" we arrive at conscious perception by a process of diminution. To perceive an image is not to add something to it, but rather to select that which is of interest to the perceiving consciousness. "Interest", or the principle of selection from/..

from the totality of the given is to be explained in terms of action. Bergson began by postulating living beings as "centres of indetermination", "centres of action". What happens when these beings perceive is that -

"they allow to pass through them, so to speak, those external influences which are indifferent to them; the others isolated, become 'perceptions' by their very isolation."<sup>126</sup>

This process of selection from the aggregate of images - which is the material universe, is the only difference between "being" and "being perceived". That is, "what is" and "what is perceived" are not to be differentiated in terms of one being "in" the external world and the other "in" the brain or "in" consciousness. The perceived image is formed in the object and not in the brain, as certain images are made to stand out from the indifferent background of virtual perceptions as the explicit horizon of the self's experience of the world.

"What you have to explain then, is not how perception arises, but how it is limited, since it should be the image of the whole, and it is in fact reduced to the image of that which interests you."<sup>127</sup>

It is not in order at this point to introduce hallucination or dreams in order to refute the idea of a perceived image being in the object, for we are still here dealing with pure perception, i.e. perception in which memory plays no part. Since phenomena such as dreams are dependent upon memory there can be no objection on this score to this "objective" theory of perception. Further, pure perception is only an idea, to which nothing in nature actually corresponds. Bergson is not committed to maintaining that because the perceived image is perceived and formed "in" the object there would therefore be "something" of this perceived image even if the perceiver were abolished. The general point he wished to establish by a consideration of the idea of perception appears to be this. If we are to/..

to understand perception at all we must begin as perception itself appears to begin, i.e. from the given world of external images, and then move in upon the central privileged image which is my body. Just as the infant's perception is apparently at first impersonal, i.e. is only little by little, and by experience, referred to a centre; the central image of the body being as it were discovered in, or analysed out of the totality of given impersonal images - so in seeking to understand the process of perception we must begin not with sensation, working out to what is sensed or perceived, but we should begin with the concrete world in which we find ourselves. In a word -

"we start from action, that is to say from our faculty of effecting changes in things, a faculty attested by consciousness and towards which all the powers of the organised body are seen to converge. So we place ourselves at once in the midst of extended images; and in this material universe we perceive centres of indetermination, characteristic of life."<sup>128</sup>

The point of analysing the idea of pure perception out of the whole activity of life is to establish the given world as the basis of any theory of perception.

But pure perception is only an idea.

"If we went no further, the part of consciousness in perception would thus be confined to threading on the continuous string of memory an uninterrupted series of instantaneous visions, which would be a part of things rather than of ourselves."<sup>129</sup>

No actual perception is like this. The very idea of consciousness without memory seems self-contradictory, and the indetermination postulated as the "true principle" for the understanding of living "centres of action" becomes simply pure chance without some element of continuing temporal self-identity.

In/..

In fact there is no perception without memory. Pure perception and memory constantly intermingle, and interpenetrate one another, exchanging something of their elements. This fusion of memory and perception is so complete that in spite of all that has been said about pure perception, which is "rather in things than in ourselves", Bergson can say that perception "ends by being merely an occasion for remembering".<sup>130</sup> It is precisely this fusion of memory and perception in the act of perceiving however, that makes it necessary to point to the objective basis of the act in pure perception; this for two reasons. First, since it is a simple matter to show how full of memory images our concrete perception is, it is also easy to overlook the impersonal objective basis of perception in which perception coincides with the object perceived. Secondly, and this is the -

"capital error .... that which sees only a difference of intensity, instead of a difference of nature, between pure perception and memory."<sup>131</sup>

The first effect of this error is to vitiate the theory of memory and also the theory of perception. For if memory be regarded as a kind of weakened perception, then the essential difference between past and present is obliterated, and the phenomena of recognition and recollection become inexplicable. On the other hand, it can be seen that to regard perception as a "strong recollection" is to repeat the fundamental error against which Bergson protests from the beginning of his book, that of regarding perception as being of primarily speculative interest. If perception is interpreted as is memory - i.e. in terms of an internal state, or internal sensations, then there is a gap to bridge between this internal state and the world of "things" about us; the world in which we are placed from the beginning in "pure" perception. This gap remains on any theory - unless indeed the problem is "solved" by denying the independent/..

independent reality of the external world, and so

"for realism as for idealism, perceptions are 'veridical hallucinations, states of the subject, projected outside himself; and the two doctrines differ merely in this; that in the one these states constitute reality, and in the other they are sent forth to unite with it.'"132

Secondly, since, as was pointed out, the assimilation of perception to memory obscures the radical difference between past and present, it is no longer possible to understand action. For the past is that which acts no longer; the present is that which is acting. That is, the actuality of our perception, that which essentially distinguished it from memory is its activity, not its greater intensity; "the past is only idea, the present is ideo-motor".133

Thus we can begin to see why the problem of memory is of such capital importance in Bergson's philosophy. The analysis of pure perception has shown that the difference between matter, the external world as it is in itself, and what is actually perceived is to be accounted for in terms of memory. For perception

"consists, in so far as it is conscious, in the separation, or the 'discernment', of that which, in matter, interests our various needs. But between this perception of matter and matter itself there is but a difference of degree and not of kind, pure perception standing towards matter in the relation of the part to the whole."134

But this is pure perception, which is only idea. What happens in reality is that -

"memory, inseparable in practice from perception, imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration, and thus by a two-fold operation compels us, de facto, to perceive matter in ourselves, whereas we, de jure, perceive matter within matter."135



It follows then that the study of memory is central to the whole cluster of questions which together make up the classical mind-body problem. For the doctrine of "matter" will depend on analysing out from what is given in perception the contribution of memory, and conversely, our understanding of "mind" will depend on our ability to grasp what "pure memory" might be. In Bergson's words,

"questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time rather than of space."<sup>136</sup>

This, however, is to anticipate the discussion of larger issues which should only be embarked upon at the conclusion of Bergson's analysis. Formally, the two hypotheses which he regards as arising out of his discussion of perception are (a) that the brain is an instrument of action, not of representation; and (b) that in pure perception we are actually placed outside ourselves, we touch the reality of the object in an immediate intuition. These hypotheses are to be tested by the analysis of "memory". Tested, but not proved, for the hypotheses seem to be insusceptible of proof, but if they accord better than any contrary thesis with evidence about the nature of memory which is to be reviewed, there will at least be a strong presumption in their favour, in the light of which Bergson will go on to complete his theory of the relation of mind and matter.

### I.3 - The Meaning of "Pure" Perception

This is not the point at which Bergson's argument should be interrupted by detailed criticism or comment, but in view of the obscurity and indeed the air of unreality consequent on Bergson's use of philosophical terms which are no longer fashionable - idealism/realism; spirit/matter etc. - it is interesting to note how very "modern" even in terms of contemporary/..

contemporary British philosophy some of his treatment is.

The subject of his essay is of course a classical one. At a time when the aims and methods of many philosophers lend themselves rather to the piecemeal treatment of individual problems, one of the few contemporary "magna opera" devoted to a single theme or range of problems is Professor Ryle's The Concept of Mind, which deals with the same subject as Matter and Memory. Nor is the resemblance solely in the theme. Though the first page of Bergson's introduction declares his study to be "frankly dualistic", <sup>137</sup> his immediate insistence that the theoretical difficulties which have always beset dualism are largely "fictitious problems", which are to be dissolved rather than resolved is markedly reminiscent of a later approach to this type of question.

One point which should be raised before going on to the treatment of memory is a consideration of what Bergson means by "pure perception".

As was noted in the exposition of Bergson's idea, "pure perception" is not meant to be a description of an actual mode of experience. It is a limiting notion whose function is to point to what Bergson takes as a basic postulate for any analysis of perception, that in perceiving we are in contact with the real world of objects, so that if this perception were "pure", i.e. devoid of all contribution from "memory" or "judgement" the image would be in the object rather than in the perceiver. This idea is to be distinguished from the assumption of the possibility of "pure experience" common to psychologists of the Gestalt school and philosophers who adopt the phenomenological approach to consciousness and perception. Bergson would argue that the "bracketing-off" of all ideas and memory so as to isolate the phenomenal field, or pre-objective world, in its purity, is not a genuine experimental possibility - though this appears to be the assumption at least sometimes of Husserl and his followers/..

followers.<sup>138</sup> Though the Gestaltists make much of the "naivete" of their subjects in experiments,<sup>139</sup> it is clear that naivete is a relative term and that for Bergson the ability to see forms, "gestaltqualitäten" of any sort is in itself evidence of experimental sophistication. No subject, with the possible exception of an infant, if James' characterisation of his world as a "blooming buzzing confusion" is accepted, could be "naive" enough to be capable of Bergson's "pure perception".

But this does not mean that his idea is simply fanciful. Though it may be impossible to attain purity of perception experimentally, this does not alter the fact that what we perceive is external to us, and can enter indifferently into any person's conscious experience as it can be acted upon by any person. It is Bergson's rebuttal of objections commonly made to this kind of view of the externality of perception that indicates the real interest of the doctrine itself. The first objection arises from the fact that our senses need education. This, it may be argued, indicates that our perceptions cannot be external. But on the other hand if we begin from "internal" sensations there seems to be no possibility of explaining how such education begins, for there would seem to be no grounds for connecting, say, a given sensation of touch with another of sight and for projecting these to a given point of space to produce the idea of a material object. Even if the projection is possible, there would remain the mystery of how the "object", once constituted, could be the object of the common experience of other observers. What the education of the senses does is rather to restore continuity and coherence to the given external world of material objects. This continuity is broken because our perceptions are not continuous, affected as they are by the motion and position of our body. It is those selective perceptions which we are enabled by memory and by experience - by the education/..

education of the senses - to unite into one continuous whole.

"The aim of this education is to harmonize my senses with each other, to restore between their data a continuity which has been broken by the discontinuity of the needs of my body, in short to reconstruct, as nearly as may be, the whole of the material object."<sup>140</sup>

The other objection puts yet more clearly the thesis which Bergson is most concerned to deny. It can be objected that on Bergson's account of perception it becomes impossible to account for sensation per se. As Berkeley argued, since pain and pleasure are not outside the body, and since further what is true of those sensations must be true of all sensation, including perceptual ones, it seems evident that perception cannot be outside the body either.

Bergson admits that -

"there is hardly any perception which may not, by the increase of the action of its object upon our body, become an affection, and, more particularly, pain. Thus we pass insensibly from the contact with a pin to its prick."<sup>141</sup>

He argues none the less that perception is not just a kind of sensation. For "affections", such as pain, are also to be understood in terms of the action of the body. The real significance of pain is that it consists in an effort, a local unavailing effort.

"Pain ... is nothing but the effort of the damaged element to set things to right - a kind of motor tendency in a sensory nerve ... There is ... a precise moment when pain intervenes: it is when the interested part of the organism, instead of accepting the stimulation, repels it. And it is not merely a difference of degree that separates affection from perception, but a difference of kind."<sup>142</sup>

It is this last sentence which is philosophically interesting.

It/..

It may be that Bergson's explanation of the nature of pain might have to be amended in the light of more recent neurophysiological studies - though the recognition, for instance, of specific receptors of pain would only strengthen his argument - but in fact the issue here is not really a physiological or even a psychological one. Basically Bergson's distinction between sensation and perception is conceptual. The analysis of "pure perception" points to this general difference between sensation and perception. An affection or sensation, is something which may be experienced within our body, but we perceive things outside us. The distinction is clearer if both sensation and perception are understood - as Bergson insists they must be understood, in terms of action. Perception measures our possible action upon things, and also the possible action of things upon us. The greater the body's power of action, the wider the field that perception embraces, and this perception expresses our virtual action upon the perceived world. Affection differs from perception in that it is real rather than virtual action. It is an automatic response to a stimulus, whereas perception corresponds not to an actual response or movement but a possible one. Perception then is not to be thought of as comprised of affections or sensations. Perception is of an object, and is founded upon an awareness of the movements of our body which are possible in relation to it.

Thus sensation and perception are distinguished from one another, but both are understood in terms of the biological functioning of our body. The mistake which consists in attempting to understand perception simply in terms of sensation comes of course from the fact that in practice there is no perception without affection. But though sensation in one sense may be a necessary condition it is not a sufficient condition of perceiving.

"The/.,

"The truth is that affection is not the primary matter of which perception is made: it is rather the impurity with which perception is alloyed."<sup>143</sup>

Bergson's reaction against the "sensationalism" current in the nineteenth century<sup>144</sup> and his assertion that perception is first of all of "things - in themselves" - though only of part of those things - is not a return to "naïve realism". He does not simply ignore the difficulties connected with perceptual illusions, hallucinations and so on, nor is he ignorant of experimental work on perception.

What the doctrine of pure perception does assert however, together with the distinction between sensation and perception which is founded upon it, is that the traditional understanding of perception as a kind of "mental synthesis" and projection of a relatively poor and incoherent pattern of "sensations" is to be revised.

It is interesting to note that at least some experimental psychologists today begin from a position not unlike that of Bergson. J.J. Gibson, in his work on visual perception<sup>145</sup> denies as a result of experiment the traditional disparity between visual stimuli and visual percepts. Experimentally, perception is a function of stimulation and stimulation in turn a function of the environment.

"The objectivity of our experience is not a paradox of philosophy but a fact of stimulation."<sup>146</sup>

Gibson's account of visual perception has been criticised<sup>147</sup> for misrepresenting the philosophical issues, but it is important that he should be criticised for the right reasons. In a later essay<sup>148</sup> he sketches his theory of perception more clearly. Perception is said to be a function of stimulation. Perception means -

"the/..



"the process by which an individual maintains contact with his environment. The word stimulation means the kinds and variables of physical energy in the environment to which the sense organs of the individual will respond."<sup>149</sup>

The theory then postulates a kind of psycho-physical correspondence, for every aspect of the perceived world there is some corresponding variable in the energy flux at the sensory receptors of the perceiver.

This assertion seems as open to objection as Bergson's "pure perception". What of the role of memory, what about "meanings", aesthetic qualities and so on? But this postulate is not meant to explain all of what we call perceptual experience.

"It is a theory of contact with the environment, not of lack of contact with it. Errors, illusions, misjudgements, hallucinations, fluctuating impressions, and misperception in general cannot be explained except by corollaries of the hypothesis, and these have not yet been stated."<sup>150</sup>

Gibson also admits the role of memory, imagination, attention, and learning, as well as variation in the sensory equipment of individuals in determining what kinds of perceptions can occur, but these are not to be regarded as so many processes for converting sensory data into percepts.

"No process of conversion is assumed. Not only the qualities of objects but also their very object-character, substantiality, solidity, and the like, are taken to be discoverable in stimulation. Objects are, as it were, sensed. The proposal is to dispense entirely with the concept of sensation as the basis of phenomenal experience and thereby to rid psychology of the persistent notion that sensory impressions are prerequisite to other impressions."<sup>151</sup>

It is not intended here to do full justice to Gibson's theory, still less is it implied that he and Bergson are in full agreement on the nature of perception, but what the example of Gibson may serve to illustrate is that/..

that Bergson's notion of "pure perception" is empirical in the best sense, in that it provides a conceptual basis for experiment. Whatever the final judgement on Gibson's work may be, his postulate of perception as a function of the environment has been fruitful in suggesting new experiments and new ways of attacking old problems.

#### I.4 - The Stand-Point of Action

Perhaps the most important point in the first chapter of Matter and Memory, one which is fundamental to Bergson's later work and also for the subject of this thesis, is his denial of what he calls the "purely speculative interest" of perception. It is this denial, and the postulate that perception is to be understood in terms of action, that also provides the most interesting and illuminating comparison with later philosophy. For at this point at least Bergson is one of the sources, or at least a precursor, of an effort which is common to most contemporary philosophers, however different their views may be in other respects. His criticism of the speculative approach, his insistence on going behind linguistic forms and the language of concepts finds an echo in various keys not only in the work of those who might acknowledge a direct debt to him - Whitehead and Marcel, phenomenologists and existentialists - but also Professor Ryle and the "philosophers of language", who might appear at first glance to be wholly different from the "mystical" and mystery-making Bergson of philosophical caricature..<sup>152</sup>

But on this point, the closest and most interesting parallels to Bergson's work are to be found in the thought of Professor J. MacMurray, especially in his Gifford Lectures.<sup>153</sup> MacMurray, like Bergson, finds escape from the dilemma posed by "idealism" and "realism" only in denying the assumption fundamental to both:

"If/..

"If we presuppose the 'Cogito', then knowledge, if it is to be truly knowledge, must start from concepts and proceed through concepts. But since Locke, or at least since Kant, it has been recognised that this is impossible. Yet the problem remains so long as the primacy of the theoretical is assumed. Attempts to make sense perceptions the basis of knowledge, as in some it clearly is, must either assimilate the material to the mental, or absorb the mental in the material."<sup>154</sup>

What must be done then is to deny the primacy of the theoretical, to deny the definition of the subject as the "I think", and to assert the primacy of the practical, the "I do". That is, "we should think from the stand-point of action."<sup>155</sup>

In some respects, the position from which Bergson and MacMurray begin seems identical. The comparison will however be more enlightening later on, when MacMurray's own distinctive exposition of the implications of "action" can be used to illuminate Bergson's treatment of the subject. The comparison is made thus early only to help to bring out what is indicated in MacMurray's use of the word "stand-point". For it is precisely a new "stand-point" that Bergson is asking us to adopt. He seldom refers in any of his books to his previous work, and almost never explicitly builds upon conclusions established in it, but in this case it does not seem that we can understand what he means by his denial that perception is primarily knowledge without explicit reference to the "intuition of duration" of Time and Free Will which was dealt with in the previous chapter.<sup>156</sup> When "inner" experience alone is considered, then "duration" is the immediate datum of consciousness. But this same enduring self, our conscious duration, is itself an abstraction from our concrete experience which is that of action. As we saw in the analysis of perception, the infant appears to begin with an "impersonal" perception, which then becomes a "personal" perception in which the "self" is distinguished/..

distinguished from the "other" - so even the immediate intuition of duration is part of a whole lived experience which includes the world in which I act. Just as the "conscious duration" of the self could only be grasped by a kind of sympathy, by an intuition, when the self was considered in isolation - as in Time and Free Will - so the self's relations to the world - which constitute the mind-body problem - can only be understood from "within" by an immediate intuition not of duration only but of what it is to act. To live this experience, to attend to this intuition, is to think from the stand-point of action.

It will be seen later that there is in fact a good deal of difference between what Bergson appears to mean by "action" and Professor MacMurray's exposition of it, but they do at least approach their problems in the same way. For Bergson's affirmation of the primarily practical interest of perception does not mean the introduction of another "concept of action" to be analysed, nor even the bringing of new light to bear on traditional problems, but is rather a change of view-point from which those problems are posed in different terms. Even from this new stand-point, there may still be much thinking and even theorising to be done about the "external world", "free will", "the interaction of mind and body", and so on, but what the new stand-point does mean is that the "external world" can no longer be spoken of in any way which implies that its "reality" is even in question. The meaning of this stand-point for problems like those of "free will" and "body and mind" will be more clearly seen as Bergson expounds his doctrines of memory.

## II.1 - The Two Forms of Memory

"If I am a thing which endures serves as principle, as 'Cogito' for philosophy, then I am Memory will become the principle the 'Cogito' of psychology. At the heart of Bergsonism there is a study, a theory, of memory."<sup>157</sup>

Thus one of Bergson's best interpreters indicates the centrality of the study of memory for Bergson's thought as a whole, "memory" and "duration" being primarily aspects of the same phenomenon. Bergson himself notes that the doctrine of memory is the keystone of his theory.

"Memory - we shall try to prove it in this work - is just the intersection of mind and matter".<sup>158</sup>

The order of Bergson's own discussion will be followed. This proceeds in three distinct stages. First, that which will occupy this section; a preliminary discussion of the concrete phenomena of memory and of recognition. This will be designed principally to remove misunderstandings and to forestall certain objections, and thus to clear the ground for the second stage of the argument, which is the discussion of "pure memory". Then finally it will be possible to return to the discussion of ordinary perception and to see how body and mind, pure perception and pure memory, come together in it.

Before entering on a consideration of what pure memory might be it is necessary to distinguish between two very different forms of what we ordinarily call memory. The distinction pointed out by Bergson is largely similar to that drawn by Professor Ryle,<sup>159</sup> between habit-memory, memory as recorded in the form of motor-habits, and memory as the recording or recalling of "images" of past events.

The two forms of memory, and the difference between them, may be illustrated by a consideration of the process of learning a lesson by heart. Remembering this lesson, in the sense of being able to repeat it correctly, has all the marks of a habit. It is learned by dint of successive repetitions, probably line by line until the moment when the whole is said to be so "imprinted" that its repetition follows "automatically" from the initial impulse. On the other hand, it is possible to "recall" individually/..



individually the several readings or repetitions which went to make up this learning process. Now it is characteristic of this recollection of any given reading that it is not like a habit, it is an image of an event,

"its essence is to bear a date, and consequently to be unable to occur again."<sup>160</sup>

The difference between the two kinds of remembering is not just that in the one case we recall a particular "image", i.e. a single reading, while in the other we recall a composite image in which all the several readings are blended. The difference is not one of degree, but of kind of memory.

"The memory of a given reading is a representation, and only a representation; it is embraced in an intuition of the mind which I may lengthen or shorten at will; I assign to it any duration I please: there is nothing to prevent my grasping the whole of it instantaneously, as in one picture. On the contrary, the memory of the lesson I have learnt, even if I repeat this lesson only mentally, requires a definite time, the time necessary to develop one by one, were it only in imagination, all the articulatory movements that are necessary: it is no longer a representation, it is an action ... it is part of my present, exactly like my habit of walking or of writing; it is lived and acted, rather than represented."<sup>161</sup>

To learn then, in the sense of to learn by heart, is to create a cerebral mechanism, a habit of the body, which expresses itself in action. To recollect particular events on the other hand, is to appeal to an independent memory which records, in the form of memory-images, all the events of our life. If memory then is regarded as somehow a "storing up" of experience, then we must recognise that there are two separate ways in which experience is stored. Memory proper records all the events of an experience in images - each with its "date", since it is of the essence of consciousness that its experiences cannot be repeated - but at the same time those very perceptions which are being recorded are having a/..



a further effect upon the perceiver. Every perception is a nascent action, and the movements which continue them modify the organism, and create in the body new dispositions towards action.

"Thus is gradually formed an experience of an entirely different order, which accumulates within the body, a series of mechanisms would up and ready, with reactions to external stimuli ever more numerous and more varied, and answers ready prepared to an ever growing number of possible solicitations."<sup>162</sup>

Now these are the two forms of memory in their "pure" state. Though neither form is to be found in nature in its "pure" state, it is important to distinguish between them in analysis, since according to Bergson, memory has often been misunderstood because when philosophers have come to deal with the actual experience of remembering in which these two forms of memory coalesce, they have attempted to find a single simple explanation for a phenomenon which is in fact complex. This has led for instance to the assumption that the cerebral mechanism which "stores" the motor habit, must also be the substratum of the associated memory-image. To show why this assumption is wrong, and to distinguish further the parts that motor habit and memory image play in our actual remembering, we must study the phenomenon of "recognition", the "concrete process by which we grasp the past in the present."

It is evident first of all that no simple associationist theory of recognition will account for these facts. That is, recognition is not simply the association of a present perception with a memory. Experience is not built up out of distinct atomic sensations, as Mill and the Associationists believed, and the physiological hypotheses associated with this doctrine are equally untenable.

Bergson distinguishes two forms of recognition which correspond to the distinction between the two forms of memory. In the first case recognition/..

recognition can consist in action and not in representation. All of our ordinary activities depend upon our constant, habitual recognition of our surroundings. Such "recognition" may, and often does, become habitual to the point where it is almost automatic, but even before this point is reached our "sense of familiarity" can be accounted for as the sense of a well-ordered motor accompaniment to our renewed perceptions.

"to recognise a common object is mainly to know how to use it,"<sup>163</sup>

"In fact, we commonly act our recognition before we think it. Our daily life is spent among objects whose very presence invites us to play a part: in this the familiarity of their aspect consists."<sup>164</sup>

Bergson is thus far from the kind of philosophic discussion which seeks to account for the "feeling of familiarity" thought to be characteristic of recognition in terms of a comparison, or blending of, the present perceptual pattern with a memory-image. For, as he points out, recognition does not necessarily involve memory-image at all. There can be recognition without recollection. Perception itself is not simply a passive registering of images or receiving of stimuli. The complete act of perception is continued in the body in the adoption of attitude, of movements which are the body's reaction to the perceptual stimulus. The function of the body, of the sensory-motor apparatus of the nervous system, is to connect perception with action.

Now Bergson's first kind of "automatic" recognition consists first in the consciousness of this organised motor accompaniment to perception. There need be no "recollection" of memory images, no "judgement" intervenes between perception and response. This kind of recognition enables us to offer an explanation not only of how there can be recognition without recollection - as we "act" our recognition in familiar surroundings; but also of how there may be recollection without recognition. This seems to/..

to occur in disorders of memory such as "psychic blindness". Bergson cites cases where persons unable to find their way in practice about the streets of their home town, were yet apparently able to "picture", and to describe in detail, these same streets.<sup>165</sup> To put it no higher, this seems to show at least that recognition is not necessarily connected with the having of memory-images.

But there is another form of recognition which does involve conscious recall or remembering, whether in the form of "picturing in the mind" or not. In his discussion of automatic recognition Bergson used the example of the process of becoming familiar with new surroundings, say the streets of an unfamiliar town, to illustrate his point. Three stages may be roughly distinguished in this process. First, when, as at first sight, the streets are completely unfamiliar and the visitor walks along them with little or no idea of their relation to one another. The last stage is that of habitual recognition, when after weeks or years of familiarity, no conscious thought is given to finding one's way about, and a person goes about his business, "automatically" taking the correct turnings and so on.

But between the first and last stages there is an intermediate one where there is conscious "remembering", where the way is found by the use of landmarks. This stage is compounded of elements of the first and the last.

"I began by a state in which I distinguished only my perception; I shall end on a state where I am hardly conscious of anything but automatism: in the interval there is a mixed state, a perception followed step by step by automatism just impending."<sup>166</sup>

That is, there is not only the habitual inattentive kind of recognition, but also that which we more usually think of as typical, attentive recognition/..

recognition, which requires the intervention of memory-images. The question is now whether the mechanism of this second recognition is to be understood in the same way as the first. Are the memory-images in attentive recognition to be understood as the same kind of quasi-automatic "continuation" of the perceptual stimulus as is the bodily movement in the case of habitual recognition? This Bergson denies.

This second kind of recognition is differentiated from habitual recognition first by being attentive. Attention has two aspects. First and negatively it consists in a certain adaptation of the body, an inhibition of movement. We have seen that in habitual acted recognition the movements of the body - which includes nervous activity - are to be thought of as a kind of continuation of the perception. In attentive recognition these movements are arrested, are only "sketched", and are continued by memories. This is the positive element of attention - that effort by which memories "go out to meet the perception", "insert themselves" into the framework provided by the movements of the body. These memory images complete, strengthen, enrich perception.

"Perception does not consist merely in impressions gathered, or even elaborated, by the mind. This is the case, at most with the perceptions that are dissipated as soon as received, those which we disperse in useful actions. But every attentive perception truly involves a reflexion, in the etymological sense of the word, that is to say the projection outside ourselves, of an actively created image, identical with, or similar to, the object on which it comes to mould itself."<sup>167</sup>

This means that recognition is not, as it is often supposed to be, a kind of comparison of two images, one given in perception and the other "awakened" in memory. It is not a rectilinear process whereby the stimulus at a receptor travels to the brain and thence "awakens" a localised memory-image. Recognition is rather a circuit composed not only/..

only of the perception-image coming as it were from without to the mind, but also the projection of the memory-image on to the perceived object.

"Any memory-image that is capable of interpreting our actual perception inserts itself so thoroughly into it that we are no longer able to discern what is perception and what is memory."<sup>168</sup>

But though in practice, in concrete perception, the element of memory cannot be separated from that which is presented externally, this should not obscure the radical difference between memory and perception, and consequently between those two forms of recognition. For in the second type, attentive recognition, there is an element of pure memory.

The idea of "pure memory" will be analysed later. It is enough at present simply to note it as an element in recollection and recognition.

Now it should be noted that Bergson does not make his distinction between the two types of recognition in terms of the point which is often considered to be the problem about recognising - viz. how is the "feeling of familiarity" about a recognised object to be accounted for? How do we make judgements - if we do make judgements - of "likeness", or "oldness"? In both cases, habitual and attentive recognition, these "feelings of familiarity" are first of all due to the consciousness of an organised motor response, or set of responses to a given perception.

"If the later perceptions differ from the first perception in the fact that they guide the body towards the appropriate mechanical reaction, if, on the other hand, these renewed perceptions appear to the mind under that special aspect which characterises familiar or recognised perceptions, must we not assume that the consciousness of a well-regulated motor accompaniment, of an organised motor reaction, is here the foundation of the sense of familiarity? At the basis of recognition there would thus be a phenomenon of a motor order."<sup>169</sup>

Now/..



Now it may be doubted whether Bergson has done much more at this point than to put the problem in another way, or at most to push it one stage farther back. Does he not simply beg the question in speaking of the "consciousness of a well-ordered motor accompaniment" (even if it were clear, which it is not in all cases, in what this motor accompaniment consists) for how is the motor accompaniment in the case of repeated perception "known" or "judged" to be the same as it was in the case of the first perception? It is not clear what his answer would be to such an objection, but what is important is to see that for Bergson this is a relatively peripheral problem. He does not regard the problem of recognition as being constituted by "feelings of familiarity", and it is the merit of his treatment that he sets the problem in the whole context of perception.

In this he again anticipates much later thinking. F.C. Bartlett, in his classic work Remembering, thus describes the usual method of investigations into this topic:

"We take a process like recognition or recall, and draw a line round it by saying that, for instance, there is recognition when, an object being re-presented, we feel, or judge, or 'know' it to be old. We then try to explain this feeling, judgement, or knowledge by some discernible peculiarity of the processes which go on within the boundary line that we have drawn. This, as the whole drift of my experimental results shows, is an illegitimate procedure. Perceiving, recognising, recalling are all psychological functions which belong to the same general series. We must begin our study of the last two, not from a consideration of the instances in which they alone occur, but from an investigation of the prior perceptual processes."<sup>170</sup>

It is precisely this, the setting of recognition, recalling and all the phenomena of memory in the whole context of perception and action that/..



that Bergson does. Bergson has indeed insisted that perception and memory are different in kind, and not merely in degree. This is the whole point of his analysis of pure perception and pure memory out of the concrete experience of perceiving and recognising. But this analysis enables us to see more clearly how perception and memory are fused not only in recognising or recalling, but in our whole perceptual experience.

The argument thus far has been concerned to point to, and to distinguish radically between, the two elements present in an actual experience such as that of recognition. There is the element of pure memory, and there is also the motor element, which are completely different things. Bergson uses the particular example of memory of words, the use of language in speaking writing and listening, to establish the independence of memory from movement, mind from body, idea from brain. There seem to be three different levels of his argument, physiological, psychological and logical.

Some understanding of neuro-physiological function is necessary, since there has been in Bergson's view a persistent tendency in psychology and philosophy either to interpret mind in terms of brain or brain in terms of mind. That is, the role of motor apparatus has been either neglected or exaggerated, to the detriment of our understanding of pure memory. In particular, a proper understanding of the function of the brain will enable us to dispense with the idea that memory is a function of the brain; that the brain is a storehouse of "images".

This idea, that specific "images" are somehow stored in the cerebral cortex, where they may be excited by an appropriate sensory stimulus, seems to receive support in some form from the facts of cerebral localisation. Bergson offers his own interpretation of the facts of aphasia/..

aphasia and other disorders of recognition to show that this is not so.

"If our hypothesis is well founded, those failures of recognition are in no sense due to the fact that the recollections occupied the injured region of the brain. They must be due to one of two causes: sometimes our body is no longer able automatically to adopt, under the influences of external stimulus, the precise attitude by means of which a choice could be automatically made among our memories; sometimes the memories are no longer able to find a fulcrum in the body, a means of prolonging themselves in action. In the first case, the lesion affects the mechanisms which continue, in an automatically executed movement, the stimulation received: attention can no longer be fixed by the object. In the second case, the lesion involves those particular cortical centres which prepare voluntary movements by lending them the required sensory antecedent, centres which, rightly or wrongly, are termed image-centres: attention can no longer be fixed by the subject. But in either case, it is actual movements which are hindered or future movements which are no longer prepared: there has been no destruction of memories."<sup>171</sup>

Bergson thus refuses to accept one of the basic tenets of clinical theory current in his day,<sup>172</sup> viz. that every memory or idea in the mind was somehow "stored" in a particular part of the cerebral cortex. In some cases this was taken as far as the postulate that -

"when we learn to read or acquire the use of a language, 'engrams' are written in appropriate brain-cells 'as the form of a seal is impressed upon wax'"<sup>173</sup>

but whether in the form of a theory of faculties, or of this kind of automatism, the notion of abstract psychological entities dominated almost all physiological and clinical work at the end of the nineteenth century and indeed well into the twentieth. Far from being the empirical basis on which a theory of mind and body might be constructed, this view of cerebral localisation of function is itself the translation in anatomical terms of the associationist doctrines of Mill and Bain.<sup>174</sup> Bergson argues/..

argues that the identification of memory, idea, image with any kind of trace or indeed any cerebral function is a misinterpretation. Memory itself, pure memory, is wholly independent of the brain, what is destroyed in cases of cerebral lesion are not memories but the machinery by which memories are translated into speech or action. "Images" are intact, the defect is in the means of their actualisation.

There is no need to enter into the detail of the various classifications of speech disorders nor even the classifications suggested by Bergson. So far as the clinical data and their interpretations are concerned, it is enough to note that Bergson, writing in 1896, anticipated in a remarkable manner the conclusions of later anatomists and neuro-physiologists on the problem of aphasia.<sup>175</sup> Hughlings Jackson in England seems to have been the one clinical worker whose work would have substantiated the theories of Bergson, but his papers, written from 1864 to 1893, received no general recognition until collected by Sir Henry Head in 1915.<sup>176</sup> Like Bergson, Jackson did not accept the identification of "ideas" "memories", "images", with particular cerebral functions.

"A psychical state is always accompanied by a physical state, but nevertheless the two things have distinct natures. To locate the damage which destroys speech and to localise speech are two different things."<sup>177</sup>

The work of Jackson, Head and later clinicians and theorists confirms Bergson's recognition of the distinction between memory as such and the motor functions by which memories are "actualised". This distinction is not so readily apparent in the normal person, but is made plain by a study of the condition of aphasic patients. Here again however, the dual nature of "memory of words" can be obscured by the misleading practice of subsuming the great variety of symptoms under a single name.

"How/..

"How, for instance, are we to characterize in one word the condition of the man who can write his name, that of his house, the number and the street, the county and the kingdom correctly, and yet cannot do the same for his mother with whom he lives? Is he suffering from agraphia or not? What name is to be applied to the state of a man who cannot read a word of a letter he has received when asked to do so, but who carried out the instructions it contains accurately with regard to time and place? Is he a case of alexia or not? In a similar way the use of the phrase *amnesia verbalis* lands us in numerous difficulties. So supposing that after the patient has failed to name several common objects he says, when shown the ink, 'That's what I should call a china pot to hold ink' - has he amnesia or not? In Jackson's view the significance of such an answer is clear; the disturbance of voluntary speech destroys the power of making the more selective answer 'ink' but permits a more descriptive response. What, again, is the condition of a man who cannot draw a 'square' when asked to do so, but, asked to draw a 'block of wood', at once draws a perfect square."<sup>178</sup>

These anomalies give a clue to the processes which lie behind the formation of speech and the memory of words. "Memory of words" is indeed a very ambiguous phrase.

"If we do use such redundant expressions, we must be thorough in our application of them, and say two things: (1) that the speechless patient has lost the memory of the word serving in speech; and (2) that he has not lost the memory of words serving in other ways. In healthy people every word is in duplicate."<sup>179</sup>

Head himself sums up this aspect of Jackson's work, thus:

"Images, whether direct or symbolic, together with those of the unconscious mental processes on which they depend, remain intact in the speechless patient. He cannot speak, he cannot write, he cannot read, not because he has lost 'images' or 'memories' of words, but because he cannot propositionize. He has lost the use of words in speech."<sup>180</sup>

These/..

These conclusions are largely negative, but before going on to expound his ideas on memory and on the relation of "soul and body", it was necessary for Bergson to refute the idea of any kind of one to one correspondence between memory and brain. In this he was successful. It has become clear that the idea of a "centre of images" in the cerebral cortex is not a useful or even a tenable one. That there is a connection between memory and brain is not of course denied, but Bergson will argue that this connection is not any kind of parallelism.

"Speaking generally, the psychical state seems to us to be, in most cases, immensely wider than the cerebral state. I mean that the brain state indicates only a very small part of the mental state, that part which is capable of translating itself into movements of locomotion. Take a complex thought which unrolls itself into a chain of abstract reasoning. This thought is accompanied by images that are at least nascent. And these images themselves are not pictured in consciousness without some foreshadowings in the form of a sketch or tendency, of the movements by which these images would be acted or played in space - would, that is to say, impress particular attitudes upon the body, and set free all that they implicitly contain of spatial movement. Now of all the thought that is unrolling, this in our view, is what the cerebral state indicates at every moment. He who could penetrate into the interior of a brain and see what happens there, would probably obtain full details of those sketched-out, or prepared, movements; there is no proof that he would learn anything else."<sup>181</sup>

Even without clinical and physiological evidence however, the associationist hypothesis can be seen to be untenable. If we consider speech for example, there would have to be on this hypothesis not just a distinct "auditory image" for every word, but as many auditory images for the same word as there are pitches of sound or qualities of voice. Or even supposing that the brain is able to organise these different sounds/..

sounds into an image of the same word, it still remains to be explained how those images are further recognised and organised in sentences and phrases. This psychological argument raises a logical point.

"to hear some theorists discourse on sensory aphasia, we might imagine that they had never considered with any care the structure of a sentence. They argue as if a sentence were composed of nouns which call up the images of things. What becomes of those parts of speech, of which the precise functions is to establish, between images, relations and shades of meaning of every kind."<sup>182</sup>

Though these remarks are part of Bergson's psychological argument, his point here seems to be not the practical psychological one that the brain would have to be a kind of computer of quite unimaginable complexity in order to store "images" of all the words available to it and organise them in the infinity of possible combinations of sentences, but rather the logical one that this is not in fact the way in which language works. Sentences are not just concatenations of words any more than propositions or "thoughts" are composed of atoms of "meanings" represented by those words.

The question of the nature of memory itself can now no longer be avoided. We have seen in the consideration of the actual processes of recognition and remembering that two very different functions are to be distinguished - that of the nervous system, particularly the cerebral cortex, and that of pure memory. These, though fused in practice, are not to be confused on analysis. Nor is one to be interpreted in terms of the other. How then is memory to be understood?

## II.2 - Pure Memory

Up to this point the words "memory" and "memory-image" have been used more or less indifferently, and no attempt has been made to distinguish between/..



between them. This procedure follows Bergson's own insistence that "pure memory", like pure perception, is distinguishable only in analysis and not in its occurrence.

"We have distinguished three processes, pure memory, memory image, and perception, of which no one, in fact, occurs apart from the others. Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it. The memory-image, in its turn, partakes of the 'pure memory' which it begins to materialize, and of the perception in which it tends to embody itself: regarded from the latter point of view, it might be defined as a perception. Lastly, pure memory, though independent in theory, manifests itself as a rule only as the coloured and living image which reveals it."

These three processes may be symbolized as the consecutive segments of a single continuous line,

"our thought describes this line in a single movement ... it is impossible to say precisely where one of the term ends and another begins."<sup>183</sup>

To understand the difference between memory and perception however, pure memory must be distinguished from its actualisation in memory-images. Thus to isolate pure memory will be to describe the reality of mental processes from the temporal aspect.

This distinction is first made in terms of a virtual and an actual memory. In pure memory, each unique moment of the conscious past survives entirely, in order, with its "date". This memory however can only become actual, in the form of a memory-image. In this process of passing from the virtual state to the actual, memory takes on more and more of the character of perception, since the image is part of the present content of consciousness. It is this which is at the root of many errors in/..

in the theory of perception and memory. For if attention is concentrated on the memory-image, then memory is interpreted as a kind of weakened perception, and a difference of degree only is established between the perceived and the remembered image. The truth is however that memory, on becoming actualised in an image, passes into something else, and its essential nature cannot be understood merely from its actualisation. There is nothing in the image itself which necessarily refers to the past, its nature is only understood by following the dynamic movement of memory itself becoming actual. To regard memory as essentially picturing, is to misrepresent not only memory but perception, for in assimilating memory to sensation, we not only materialize memory, which is ideal, but idealize sensation, which is extended and localized. But -

"memory actualized in an image differs profoundly from pure memory. The image is a present state, and its sole share in the past is the memory whence it arose. Memory, on the contrary, powerless as long as it remains without utility, is pure from all admixture of sensation, is without attachment to the present, and is consequently unextended."<sup>184</sup>

Pure memory has thus been characterised as virtual, ideal, powerless, detached from the present, indeed unconscious. The notion of pure memory is not perhaps so difficult to grasp as the proliferation of Bergson's adjectives seems to make it. However remembering is explained, the problem is constituted by the fact that the very notion of remembering itself implies the independence of the memory from the present consciousness in which we remember it. When we remember we mean that the memory "was there" in some sense before the present act of remembering. It seems natural then in attempting to understand how memories "exist" while not actually present to consciousness to think of memory as a kind of storehouse in the brain or the mind. Bergson has denied however that this/..

this model is appropriate. It is a fallacy even to ask the question "where" memories are. This is to frame the question in terms of space, whereas the distinction between pure memory and perception or memory-image is to be conceived in terms of time. Pure memory is concerned with what is past; the present, my present, is compounded of sensation and movement; the past is powerless, the present is sensori-motor. Yet we have said that this past is known to "exist" in memory in virtue of its connection with our present consciousness. To complete the answer of what pure memory is we must return to this question of its connection with present consciousness.

The question of the connection between pure memory and present consciousness is the same as the question of the connection between the two forms of memory distinguished earlier. There is habit-memory, which is the assembly of intelligently constructed mechanisms by which we adapt ourselves to the present situation, which acts our past experience rather than represents it. There is also true or pure memory, which "has been left to hang, as it were, suspended in the void".<sup>185</sup> It must be remembered of course that these two elements have been isolated only by analysis from the reality of mental processes. Neither in fact occurs without the other, so that there is no question of conceiving "mind" as a kind of sum of these parts. They indicate rather ideal limits of the dynamic unity of memory between which consciousness may "place itself" according to the degree of its "attention to life".

Bergson represents the totality of recollections accumulated in memory diagrammatically by the figure of a cone whose pointed end, moving forward unceasingly, represents "my present", while the base, which remains motionless, represents the limit of detachment from the present, a state in which memory of the past would break up into an infinity/..

infinity of individual images. Consciousness approaches, though it could never reach, the point of the cone in the measure that it attends to present reality, responding by motor reaction to sensory stimulation, while it approaches the base in the measure that it is detached, as in dreaming, from its sensory and motor state. The bodily memory, composed of sensori-motor mechanisms, offers to the unconscious ineffective memory the means of materialising itself, of becoming present, while the memory of the past offers to these mechanisms, by filling out and interpreting present experience, guidance in the selection of the appropriate motor reaction. In the case of attentive perception, when attention is concentrated as nearly as possible upon what is presented, the function of the motor mechanisms is to scan and, as it were, to continue in adaptive movements the stimulus from the object. It is this motor adaptation which provides the sketch into which memories project themselves, becoming as they are actualised, less and less individual, more capable, from their lack of distinguishing features, of being applied to, completing and interpreting the present perception.

Thus there comes a point where it is impossible to say where perception ends and memory begins. Thus seeing a house, or hearing and understanding a word, is a function at once of the visual or auditory stimulus and of the memories of similar seeing and hearing in the past. Conversely, the very indetermination of bodily attitudes, their lack of attention to life, may clear the way for random or capricious actualisation of memory-images. This would be the case in particular in dreaming.

It is evident of course that "bodily attitudes", "movements", "motor diagrams" cannot mean overt movements of the whole body, though, as was noted in the discussion of recognition, Bergson does not really make clear what he does mean.<sup>186</sup> These terms should rather be taken to refer/..

refer, in more modern terminology, to patterns of stimulation,<sup>187</sup> or patterns of cortical firing.<sup>188</sup> Memory is thus a synthesis, and not a sum, of idea and motor apparatus, past and present. This point is brought out clearly when we recall that in fact our "present" is already past; since the "present" has no duration but is merely the dividing line between the past and the future; our consciousness of the present is already in some sense memory itself.

This diagrammatic representation may not explain everything, but it does serve to bring out the dynamic unity of Bergson's conception of memory and perception. Mental life is not an association, combination, or any kind of arrangement of discrete independent entities like "perceptions" or "images" existing in their own right. In all mental processes, in intelligent thought as well as in more rudimentary functions, the past is used in guiding our present action or response, and present perception is used as a symbol of the past. If we ask how the past is "there" in memory, this question can only be answered by showing how it is organised for use.

Bergson demonstrates his conception of this organisation in his account of general ideas. This is not intended as a solution to the ontological or epistemological problems about universals, though the psychological analysis of the notions of resemblance and generality not only demonstrates more of the nature and function of memory, but also, Bergson thinks, shows how much traditional discussion rests on a misconception of the problem.

There is no need to enter into the detail of Bergson's analysis of "Nominalism" or "Conceptualism". Whatever names they bear, it seems that such theories draw their strength mainly from the deficiencies of alternative theories.<sup>189</sup> The common error of the traditional epistemological/..

epistemological doctrines is to suppose that we can begin with the perception of individual objects. If however we regard perception from the stand point of utility, of biological need, then it is evident that the idea of an individual object, like the general idea, is of relatively late development in evolutionary terms.

Perception is primarily of the useful, and therefore perception of similarity is primary. Now this does not imply any operation of "abstraction". Even a cow, or a more rudimentary organism, can perceive the similarity of grass here with grass there, or better, similarity "acts objectively like a force",<sup>190</sup> provoking identical reaction. This reaction is provided in diverse circumstances, given only that the particular element reacted to remains in changing surroundings. This is the germ of what in human consciousness is developed into the general idea, and even in human beings similarity is responded to before it is perceived, the general idea is experienced before it is represented.

"Here then we escape at last from the circle in which we appeared to be confined. In order to generalize, we said, we have to abstract similarity, but in order to disengage similarity usefully we must already know how to generalize. There is really no circle, because the similarity, from which the mind starts when it first begins the work of abstraction, is not the similarity at which the mind arrives when it consciously generalizes. That from which it starts is a similarity felt and lived; a similarity which is automatically acted. That to which it returns is a similarity intelligently perceived or thought. And it is precisely in the course of this process that are built up, by the double effort of the understanding and of the memory, the perception of individuals and the conception of genera - memory grafting distinctiveness upon resemblances which have been spontaneously abstracted, the understanding disengaging from the habit of resemblances the clear idea of generality."<sup>191</sup>



It is as if the understanding imitates nature in setting up a number of motor apparatuses, to make a limited number of them answer to an unlimited number of individual objects; the assemblage of these mechanisms is articulate speech.

If we now recall the figure of the cone we see what a misconception it is to attempt to fix the nature of our apprehension of the general idea or universal. For it is the essence of the general idea to be moving between the plane of action and the plane of pure memory. A general idea may take the form of an uttered word - when the consciousness is concentrated, is at the pointed end of the cone - or the same idea may, when consciousness is more "distended", express itself in the many individual images which have gone to make it up. Recognition of similarity may be expressed in an identical reaction to a stimulus or sensation which varies within limits; this "reaction" in the case of human beings may express itself in language, but such recognition is only possible because the memory of other perceptions is synthesised with present perception and recognition. But the general idea is not either the enumeration of examples or the "name" of a quality or characteristic.

"It consists in the double current which goes from one to the other - always ready either to crystallize into uttered words or to evaporate into memories."<sup>192</sup>

We may doubt whether all the epistemological problems connected with "universals" may thus be reduced to psychological considerations, but this account of general ideas is more an illustration of Bergson's view of mind than anything else. His polemic is always against associationism. The "cardinal error" of associationism -

"is to have set all recollections on the same plane, to have misunderstood the greater or less distance that separates them from the present bodily state, that is, from action. Thus associationism/..

associationism is unable to explain either how the recollection clings to the perception which evokes it, or why association is effected by similarity or contiguity rather than in any other way."<sup>193</sup>

Bergson's criticism is valid for more than the old associationist psychology, for it applies to any attempt to regard memory and perception, or memories and perceptions, as separable mental entities or functions. What his stand-point of action ultimately means is that -

"we have supposed that our entire personality, with the totality of our recollections, is present, undivided within our actual perception."<sup>194</sup>

Association, resemblance, contiguity, the relations that associationism could not explain satisfactorily, are explained on this view in terms of the movement of consciousness. Though the whole personality is "present" in perception, though the whole of past recollections are contained in the figure of the cone, not all memories obviously are present to consciousness at any one time. This is because consciousness moves between the limits of pure perception and pure memory. It "contracts or expands", and so "concentrates on", "attends to", or "illumines" a greater or smaller amount of its virtual content.

Resemblance, similarity, are to be explained in terms of the growing complexity of response possible to the mind as it moves between the limit of sensori-motor mechanism - where response would be automatic and invariable - to the limit of pure memory, where no resemblance would be perceived at all.

But how is this movement itself to be explained. The answer to this question is necessarily vague, since to explain the movement of consciousness would be to explain consciousness and it is difficult to see how this could be done in terms which do not assume the knowledge of/..

of what is to be explained. Consciousness cannot be reduced to terms other than those of consciousness itself. It seems, however, that consciousness, rooted as it is in that complex of sensori-motor mechanism which is my body, in the pattern of sensation and movement which is "my present", is that which gives "reality", "presence" to mind and memory. Consciousness is the temporal aspect of the body. The activity of mind is much wider than the sensations and movements of the present, but the body, with its temporal aspect, consciousness, serves to root the mind in present reality.

"If an idea is to live, it must touch present reality on some side; that is to say, it must be able from step to step, and by progressive diminutions or contractions of itself, to be more or less acted by the body at the same time as it is thought by the mind."<sup>195</sup>

The body that is, conditions our "attention to life" and it is this function which is affected by brain injuries, by psychic disturbances or disease, this function which is relaxed in sleep. None of these conditions, pathological or normal, can be thought of as directly affecting "mind"; we saw in the study of aphasia that cortical lesions do not destroy "memories", but the mechanism by which they become actual. "mind" is idea, memory is essentially "spirit", and cannot be thought of as being destroyed on the destruction of the mechanisms by which they are materialised.

Strictly speaking the study of memory and perception should conclude at this point, but these last considerations make more pressing a point which has been left in suspense. This is the question of the union of "soul and body". Bergson has made a profound distinction between matter and spirit, and all his psychological study of how memory is "actualised" in a motor mechanism cannot be convincing till he has shown/..

shown how it is logically possible for one to be united with the other.

It is in dealing with this issue too that Bergson first raises epistemological questions which will be central to the present study.

### III:1 - Body and Mind

Attention was drawn in the first section of this chapter to what was called the "stand-point of action". In the first pages of Matter and Memory Bergson sets out the postulate that the body is to be considered as a "centre of action", and the whole of his study of memory and perception is informed by this. This postulate is now, as a result of the analysis, accorded the status of a conclusion, which is -

"that the body, always turned towards action, has for its essential function to limit, with a view to action, the life of the spirit."<sup>196</sup>

The study of memory and perception and their interaction, one actualising in motor function what is virtual in the other, memory in its turn completing and guiding these mechanisms, shows that -

"the orientation of our consciousness towards action appears to be the fundamental law of our psychical life."<sup>197</sup>

The recognition of this "fundamental law" is to be the starting point for the consideration of the present problem, for though thought, if it is necessarily related to action in the world, must therefore be in real contact with the world, it is none the less true that the immediate necessities of action, and the adaptation of mental processes to them, distorts our apprehension of reality. This is nowhere more true than in the traditional problem of the relation of body and mind.

The intractability of the problem as traditionally conceived lies in the difficulty, or impossibility, of resolving the double antithesis of/..

of the extended and the unextended, and of quality and quantity. Body, matter, is extended, spatial, quantitative, whereas mind is unextended and qualitative, and there seems to be no common measure between them, no way in which we can conceive how one can act upon the other. Bergson has repudiated every suggestion that mind can be an "emanation" or epiphenomenon of matter, and has equally strongly insisted on the objective reality of matter, and so, by refusing to interpret one in terms of the other, has apparently widened the gap between them. He now suggests however, that this traditional formulation is a misconception, due to the distortion of our apprehension of reality by the needs of action.

We saw earlier that though perception is in touch with the real world, the perceived world is not to be identified with reality. Perception is selection. From the whole of the given, perception selects in accordance with the biological needs of the organism and completes, synthesizes, through the operation of memory, the given data into a whole. The error of the traditional formulation of the body/mind problem, which is accepted by the opposing theories of how to reconcile the opposition of the extended and the unextended, is to take the discontinuous contents of perception as characteristic of reality, without taking account of the work of selection and analysis carried on in perception. Attention may be concentrated on the discontinuous data, as in empiricism, or upon the relations which can be constructed between them, as in dogmatic idealism, but these systems refute each other and we are forced in the end to a critical philosophy, which holds all knowledge to be relative and the ultimate nature of things to be inaccessible to the mind.

This is Bergson's view of the ordinary course of philosophic thought. The enterprise he proposes however, is that of attempting to divest ourselves/..

ourselves of the "prejudice of action", that is, by taking account of the distortion of our ordinary experience by the selective operation of perception, to recover our grasp of the real. This method demands -

"an entirely new effort. To give up certain habits of thinking, and even of perceiving, is far from easy: yet this is but the negative part of the work to be done; and when it is done, when we have placed ourselves at what we have called the turn of experience, when we have profited by the faint light, which illuminating the passage from the immediate to the useful, marks the dawn of our human experience, there still remains to be re-constituted, with the infinitely small elements which we thus perceive of the real curve, the curve itself stretching out into the darkness behind them ... The final effort of philosophical research is a true work of integration."<sup>198</sup>

This new effort is the attempt to put aside the exigencies of action which normally force us to regard our world as composed of heterogeneous elements, and to realise reality as a continuum. Not that Bergson denies that reality is heterogeneous, that there are real distinctions in it, but he argues that the discontinuity established by common sense between objects of sense is an arbitrary one.

"All division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division."<sup>199</sup>

It is our "needs", in the broadest sense of the word, that lead us to "carve up" the moving continuity of the given into discrete objects in accordance with our action or possible action upon them. The artificiality of this division is continued in our dissociation of permanence and change, and our representation of permanence by "bodies" and change by "movement in space".

The artificiality of the divisions of common sense may be illustrated by the work of the chemist or physicist. In accordance with their "needs", matter/..



matter may be regarded as "composed" of cells or of particles, and particularly in the work of the physicist, we have seen what once were thought to be ultimate constituents of matter dissolve into something else.

"we see force more and more materialized, the atom more and more idealized, the two terms converging towards a common limit and the universe thus recovering its continuity."<sup>200</sup>

Bergson's basic point here is one that was made in Time and Free Will, namely that movement is real and indivisible, and that if it is not impossible, it is at least artificial to represent or symbolize it by anything other than itself. In the earlier work Bergson was particularly concerned with the errors which result from the spatialising or quantifying of the phenomena of consciousness, but here he wishes to extend the argument to cover physical phenomena as well.

"Motion, as studied in mechanics, is but an abstraction or a symbol, a common measure, a common denominator, permitting the comparison of all real movements with each other; but these movements, regarded in themselves, are indivisibles which occupy duration, involve a before and after, and link together the successive moments of time by a thread of variable quality which cannot be without some likeness to the continuity of our own consciousness."<sup>201</sup>

This connection between consciousness and physical motion, which is the connection between quality and quantity, is illustrated by a consideration of physical phenomena. We are assured that material objects, the light and sound by which we see and hear, are "composed" of many millions of particles in motion, which our consciousness "contracts" into solids or sensation. This is to say that our own particular rhythm or tension of duration is such that millions of phenomena succeed each other which we are unable to discriminate separately and which we consequently/..

consequently fuse and immobilize into sensation and quality. But it is clear that this is dependent simply upon the "tension" of our consciousness. At another level, we know in experience how it is possible to expand what would be a few moments of conscious time into a much larger "lived" period in dream. We can imagine, that is, rhythms or tensions of conscious duration of a much higher or lower intensity than our own - in which for instance the moments of sub-atomic time would be discriminable as seconds are to us, or at the other end of the scale, in which whole centuries of our time would be contracted into the merest instants. In short then, to perceive means to contract, indeed, to immobilize.

This does not mean that we are wrong to think that the "real world" is in some sense given to us in perception.

"That there are in a sense multiple objects, .... is an indisputable fact"<sup>202</sup>

but our error arises when we absolutize the conditions of our own perception into properties of the world, when, in order to support the reality which we recognise to be divisible according to our purposes, we postulate indifferent homogeneous media - space and time. Homogeneous space and time are -

"neither properties of things nor essential conditions of our faculty of knowing them ... They are the diagrammatic designs of our eventual action upon matter."<sup>203</sup>

Are we then forced back upon the hypothesis that space and time are no more than forms of our sensibility? Bergson maintains that there is a middle way between the critical philosophy on the one hand and the conception of real homogeneous space and time on the other. The common error of the philosophies is to suppose that conceptual space and time are the only forms in which space and time can be apprehended. But we have/...

have an immediate, ante-predicative experience of space, a "concrete extension, continuous, diversified and at the same time organised", which is not "bound up with the amorphous and inert space which subtends it."<sup>204</sup> This Bergson calls extensity. This is that immediate apprehension of the diversity of sensible qualities which is prior to our projection of it in terms of abstract measurable space. It is experienced in our feelings of direction, in the qualitative difference sensed between one place and another in bodily movement.

"So understood, space is indeed the symbol of fixity and of infinite divisibility. Concrete extensity, that is to say the diversity of sensible qualities, is not within space; rather it is space that we thrust into extensity. Space is not a ground on which real motion is posited; rather it is real motion that deposits space beneath itself."<sup>205</sup>

It is by no means easy to describe what Bergson means by extensity. It is best understood in largely negative terms, as the assertion of the priority of our perception of concrete directions, our apprehension of sensible qualities, over the limiting conception of pure space, which is no more than a "mental diagram". As such it is a logical development of the view expounded in Time and Free Will,<sup>206</sup> and a clarification of it. What is less clear however, is how this notion of extensity can serve the purpose to which it is now to be put, as an intermediary, a notion of spatiality which admits of degrees, between the extended and the unextended. The model for this use is evidently the idea of tension, on which the real weight of the argument for the interaction of body and mind falls.

Questions relating to subject and object, body and mind, must be put in terms of time rather than of space.<sup>207</sup> This temporal distinction is made in terms of tension. We saw that consciousness has its own rhythm, /..

rhythm, that in one of its moments are concentrated many millions of the diluted diffuse "moments" of matter. The importance of this new distinction in terms of time is that it admits of degrees, whereas the distinction in terms of homogeneous space does not. There is no transition between what is spatial and what is extra-spatial.

"But if, in fact the humblest function of spirit is to bind together the successive moments of the duration of things, if it is by this that it comes into contact with matter and by this also that it is first of all distinguished from matter, we can conceive an infinite number of degrees between matter and fully developed spirit,"<sup>208</sup>

We are to set the problem of the relation of mind and matter in entirely new terms. We cannot understand their relation and interaction if we think of them as realities of entirely different kinds, the one extended, the other not extended. But this dichotomy of the extended and unextended is not one that is given in reality, but one that we impose upon reality by thinking of it in terms of the immobile and the unchanging, in short, in terms of the homogeneous space which is the ideal schema in terms of which we interpret the world in view of our action upon it. When however we realise that all reality is mobility and change, not only mind but "matter" also, that the constitution of the world into its parts or objects is a function, in part at least, of the tension of our own duration, then it becomes possible to see how there might be a bringing together of matter and mind. The difference between them is essentially one of tension.

It is characteristic of conscious duration that its parts, or moments, though successive, are not external to one another. Mind or consciousness is essentially memory. The parts or moments of matter are infinitely more diluted, are external to one another, identical with one/..

one another. But though there is this difference between them they are now being thought in terms of the same reality, that of time and movement. Because they are thus, however far apart, on the same level, their interrelation can be thought. Indeed this thought of them in terms of time rather than of space is the only way in which they are to be brought together.

"Only one hypothesis remains possible; namely, that concrete movement, capable, like consciousness, of prolonging its past into its present, capable, by repeating itself, of engendering sensible qualities, already possesses something akin to consciousness, something akin to sensation. On this theory it might be this same sensation diluted, spread out over an infinitely larger number of moments, this same sensation quivering, as we have said, like a chrysalis within its envelope."<sup>209</sup>

Thus Bergson concludes his study of memory and perception, and his proposed solution to the traditional problem of body and mind. After the discussion of his proposed solution to this latter problem, a critical summary will be given of what appear to be the most important points in Bergson's theory of memory and perception, in particular those which will serve as a basis for his epistemology, which is to be considered in the next chapter.

### III.2 - Tension and Extensity

First then, the solution of the classical problem of body and mind. Bergson's argument is difficult and sometimes ambiguous. Even the most sympathetic of his commentators either ignore or simply reproduce his argument,<sup>210</sup> while the less sympathetic find an easy target in Bergson's fondness for sharp distinctions and paradoxical statement. It will be argued however that Bergson's restatement of the problem is of real value.

We saw that matter was assimilated to mind in the idea of extensity and tension. The effect of the introduction of these ideas, particularly in the latter, was to transform the radical dualism of matter and mind, of the extended and the unextended, quality and quantity, into a distinction of degree only.

It is difficult to see that this is anything other than a confusion. To take tension first, since, as was noted, the idea of extensity is certainly modelled on, and in part derived from it. Bergson's conclusion is that

"between sensible qualities, as regarded in the representation of them, and these qualities treated as calculable changes, there is therefore only a difference in rhythm of duration, a difference of internal tension."<sup>211</sup>

But what does this last phrase mean? In particular, to what does the word "internal" refer? "Tension" is a perfectly intelligible notion insofar as it refers to the conditions of our own consciousness. If we leave aside the question of what kind of an enterprise it would be to attempt to free ourselves from these conditions, it can at least be agreed that another kind of consciousness is imaginable. We can agree that our attribution of sensible qualities to material bodies is a function of our own having, or rather being, bodies. That is, for a sub-atomic particle endowed with consciousness, the "hardness" or "redness" of an object could obviously not be what they are for us. But if this is intelligible at all, it is so only because we are still thinking or imagining in terms of our consciousness. The difference, that is, between qualities as they are for us in perception, and the same qualities "treated as calculable changes" is indeed a difference of "rhythm of duration", but a difference in possible rhythms of duration within the perceiving consciousness, and not, as Bergson seems to suggest, a difference as between the tension/..



tension of duration within the perceiving consciousness and that of the object perceived.

It seems in fact that the analysis of the notion of tension amounts to an arbitrary assimilation of the continuity of conscious duration to the continuous flow of energy which constitutes matter. These are of course differentiated in terms of the "concentration" of the one and the "dilution" of the other, but the use of these words seems to be no more than a papering over of the unbridged logical gap between the successive yet interpenetrating moments of consciousness and the succession of mutually external "impulses" of matter. It is one thing to say that the distinction between mutual interpenetration and mutual externality of "parts" is a characteristic difference between mind and matter, consciousness and materiality, and another to show that this is the only difference.

There are really two assumptions, first that in speaking of the "moments" of consciousness and the "moments" of matter we are speaking of the same sort of thing; and secondly, if we grant that the first assumption is (a) intelligible and (b) true, it is further assumed that the distinction between mutual externality and mutual interpenetration is such that there can be a gradation between the two, that it is intelligible to speak of one becoming the other. Bergson seems himself to hesitate before the latter assumption, for though he can affirm that

"between brute matter and the mind most capable of reflexion there are all possible intensities of memory or, what comes to the same thing, all the degrees of freedom"<sup>212</sup>

yet on the following page he asks -

"But have we here anything but a metaphor? Does not a marked distinction, an irreducible opposition, remain between matter properly so called and the lowest degree of freedom or of memory? Yes, no doubt, the distinction subsists, but union becomes/..

becomes possible, since it would be given, under the radical form of a partial coincidence, in pure perception."

The last sentence seems at once to indicate the root of the confusion in Bergson's account and also to point towards what is of real value in his restatement of the problem.

It was noted<sup>213</sup> that the first purpose of the introduction of the notion of pure perception was to establish the fact that in perception we are in real contact with the world. Though our actual perception is impregnated with memory, i.e. involves a projection of memory-image as well as a mere reception of stimulus; though it is to be interpreted in terms of our fundamental interest in action, i.e. perception is a selection from the real, nevertheless the idea of pure perception is meant to indicate an immediate contact with the environment on the basis of which alone we can understand the division and elaboration of what is perceived by our active interest and by memory. Perception is first a function of stimulation, whatever other elements there may be in it. The idea of pure perception is thus at this level a working hypothesis which provides at the very least a basis for experiment.

But it was also noted that pure perception does not occur in nature. It is important to note that it cannot occur. We saw that pure perception at its limit would be like the "perception" of an unconscious material point which

"gathers and transmits the influences of all the points of the material universe, whereas our consciousness only attains to certain parts and to certain aspects of these parts. Consciousness - in external perception - lies in just this choice."<sup>214</sup>

Pure perception is therefore by definition unconscious, and consciousness consists in the contraction and selection from the whole of the given.

But/.

But what this means is that the idea of pure perception cannot serve the new purpose to which Bergson wishes to put it. He has tried to make a material assimilation of matter to mind in terms of tension, and points to the idea of pure perception as that in which matter and mind "coincide". But even in Bergson's terms an essential difference remains. For it is evident that for "perception" in any meaningful sense to occur at all there must be a difference in tension as between that which is perceived and the perceiver. The reason why material object does not "perceive", is that it has the same tension, or lack of it, as its material environment. The "influences" of that environment pass through it, and are not held together in that tension or memory which constitutes perception. Thus if mind and matter "coincide" in pure perception, this is so only at the cost of mind's losing that tension which constitutes it as mind.

#### IV - Conclusion

##### IV.1 - The Embodied Mind

This criticism of the terms of Bergson's proposed solution to the problem of the relation of body and mind thus turns on the fact that his solution is inconsistent with his own premises. The meaning of his "dualism" is that, as Time and Free Will was concerned to show, duration and consciousness cannot be understood except in terms of duration itself. The attempt to assimilate consciousness to unconsciousness or mind to matter in terms of "tension" only obscures this point, which as will be seen, is fundamental not only to the understanding of consciousness but also to Bergson's whole theory of knowledge. The value of Bergson's analysis of memory and perception for the problem of the relation of body and mind is not in his demonstration of how the two "coincide" in/..

in some quasi-physical manner in pure perception, but rather his view of how body and mind are inseparably "compresent" in ordinary or completed perception. For it is the fusion of memory and perception in our experience of the world which is the real union of body and mind, not their coincidence in "pure" perception. Bergson's contribution to the resolution of the classical problem is not so much in his conclusion as in his point of departure.

This point of departure was seen to be that of the self embodied in the world. The image of the body is central in that it is known not only from within but from without. It forms part of that system of images which is "my world", which centres round the body, and it forms also part of that system of images which is the "objective" world, i.e. the images referred to one another and not to any body as a centre. The point of putting the problem in these terms is to see that neither of these systems can be reduced to or derived from the other. This is very similar to the starting point of G.F. Stout, who in a similar fashion rejects the disjunction of the "purely mental", from the body considered as one external object among others.

"What self-consciousness reveals is not mere mind or 'mental phenomena', but mind and body together in the inseparable unity of the embodied self."

For Stout also the body is central. The supposed contrast between bodily process and mental process is in fact always, at least in part, a contrast between the body as internal object and the body as external object.

"But however undeniable and important the distinction is between the body as external and as internal object, it neither is nor implies a severance of mind and body such as would make it a question how they can come together. It supplies no reason why their/..

their unity in self-consciousness should not be simply accepted as 'ultimate datum'.<sup>215</sup>

Bergson's description of the immediate experience of the image of the body as the centre of the system of images which forms the world is to be taken in the same way, as the ultimate irreducible datum of experience, and his analysis of memory and perception as an attempt to show how these processes are to be understood from this point of view. This understanding of Bergson owes something to later work on the same problems. The role given to the body-subject in immediate experience is perhaps best understood in the light of later explorations of this idea in the work of such philosophers as Merleau-Ponty and Marcel. Professor Alexander suggests indeed that

"it would be to miss the very intention of Bergson's thought to divorce it completely from the effect it had upon the thoughts of Marcel and Lavelle, Whitehead and Heidegger. The expositor would then do well, rather than attempt to re-construct his philosophy, to seek for its 'sense', a sense located along the line that runs between the text itself and its contemporary projections."<sup>216</sup>

It would be far beyond the scope of the present study to try to trace the relation between Bergson's work and contemporary phenomenology, existentialism, and process philosophy. Bergson, or Bergsonism, has suffered as well as gained from its very success, and the attempt has here been made to expound Bergson with as little reliance as possible on his commentators, but for present purposes it may well be that the best method of demonstrating how Bergson is being understood is to attempt to relate his ideas to current trends in philosophy in English, even though there may be little or no explicit influence of Bergson upon these trends.

It has been said that Bergson's point of departure is similar to that/..

that of Stout, who remarks that the "experience" of the self as embodied ought either to be shown to be illusory, or to be taken as a fundamental datum in any attempt to determine the relation of body and mind."<sup>217</sup> In a recent study,<sup>218</sup> G.N.A. Vesey has taken up this suggestion, and has attempted to substantiate it by a refutation of arguments purporting to show that the experience of the mind as embodied is illusory. The two features of experience which contribute most to the understanding of mind as embodied are those of bodily sensation and of "voluntary" movement. These features of experience are defended against any theory which would account for them in terms of inference or causality, in short, as anything other than immediate. For the irrelative Cartesian dualism of mind and body there is to be substituted the correlative duality of subject and object. We may thus arrive at a theory which preserves the mutual distinctness of body and mind while ridding them of that mutual externality which constitutes the problem of how they are related in experience.

It would be difficult to summarise Vesey's arguments, since they depend at times upon very fine distinctions and are always already highly compressed. There is no need to do this however. Though there is nothing in these arguments wholly incompatible with Bergson's approach, their methods are very different, and the reference is only introduced here to illustrate by contrast Bergson's standpoint. For the embodied self for Bergson is not primarily characterized by the experience of voluntary movement or bodily sensation only. Immediate experience includes already some experience of the world about us.

"We start from action, that is to say our faculty of effecting changes in things, a faculty attested by consciousness and towards which all the powers of the organized body are seen to converge. So we place ourselves at once in the midst of extended/..



extended images; and in this material universe we perceive centres of indetermination, characteristic of life."<sup>219</sup>

If this is taken as a statement of what is given in immediate experience, it can be seen that the problem of the relation of body and mind wears a very different aspect in Bergson's statement from the traditional one. Immediate experience is not simply that of the conscious self, nor even of the embodied self, but of the embodied self-in-the-world. More even than this, though this is not a point Bergson works out, the last sentence quoted suggests that we are also immediately aware of other selves, other "centres of action". Matter and Memory can thus be seen as an attempt to make explicit and to substantiate this view of immediate experience. Bergson attempts to undercut most objections to this viewpoint by his insistence on the primacy of action. Our "faculty of effecting changes in things" guarantees at once the real existence and efficacy of the conscious acting self and also the reality of the "things" and the changes which are effected in them. The "dualist" and "realist" arguments which would make the existence of the objective world problematic or deny the reality of "mind" are themselves abstractions from this immediate experience. So too are less radical theories, which, while not seeking to explain away "body" or "mind", would nevertheless make their union a mystery. The primary postulate of all such theorists is that the self is primarily "knower" rather than "agent".

#### IV.2 - Memory and Perception

The major themes of Matter and Memory are to be understood as a description of the immediate experience of the self as agent. It is in order to characterize experience that pure perception and pure memory are analysed out from it. The idea of pure perception, devoid of memory, where the subject is merged with the world of things, enables us to recognise/..

recognise conscious perception as being a selection from the total "influence" of all the surrounding images, whereby certain images are made to stand out from an indifferent background of virtual perceptions. In Merleau-Ponty's words,

"the pure image of Matter and Memory is accompanied by consciousness of itself at the moment when the physical forces, instead of passing through the body and releasing automatic responses in it, are dissipated in a 'centre of indetermination', that is, in a being capable of action proper; and thus the zone of our possible action will be marked out in detail by our perception."<sup>220</sup>

The first condition for the development of the self as a "centre of indetermination" is the complex nervous substructure which offers a variety of responses to a given stimulus. But it is evident that complexity of motor apparatus itself does not explain this indetermination of response. The choice of response must be made on the basis of experience, that is, on the basis of the images of the past preserved in memory. The conception of pure memory also enables us to see its part in actual perception and in the actualisation of memory in memory-images.

Bergson believes that objections to the idea of pure memory, that is, the hypothesis that all our past experiences are preserved whole and entire in memory, each with its "name and date", are often based on a failure to distinguish between the two forms of memory. This distinction, between habit-memory and memory proper, is important and useful, not only in the narrower question of memory, but for the question of knowledge. Professor Ryle draws the same kind of distinction between "having learned and not forgotten", and "recalling". The first sense, which he regards as the most important, is very similar to Bergson's habit-memory. Ryle remarks that

"'remember'/. .

"'remember' in this use is often, though not always, an allowable paraphrase of the verb 'to know'",<sup>221</sup>

It is evident, though Ryle does not explicitly say so, that he regards "having learned and not forgotten" as the most important sense of the word "remember" because of its close connection with the "dispositional" sense in which he understands most of the words we use to describe human behaviour. The connection is particularly obvious with "knowing", in the sense of "knowing how".<sup>222</sup>

Bergson however makes this distinction between the two forms of memory a preliminary to his account of pure memory, in which the whole of our past survives. The objections to this notion are not to be dealt with so simply as Bergson seems to think, one of the difficulties being that of attaching a clear meaning to the doctrine in the absence of anything that could count as evidence. Evidence is in Bergson's term logically impossible to produce, since any recall, whether reported or re-enacted in speech or action, or even if merely recalled to mind, becomes ipso facto no longer pure memory but memory-image, which is pure memory actualised in a motor function, and therefore fused with present perception and action. Bergson himself appears to hesitate as to whether pure memory is an empirical hypothesis or not. Neither pure memory nor pure perception "occur in nature" we are told, yet in Creative Mind he claims a measure of verification for his idea from psycho-analytic and other techniques which have shown how great tracts of past experience apparently "lost" can be remembered and indeed in some sense "relived".<sup>223</sup>

It is perhaps best not to press the logic of the doctrine of pure memory too far, but to understand it in the sense in which it is evidently meant to be taken, i.e. as first of all affirming the other, temporal dimension/..

dimension of perceptual experience. Just as the idea of pure perception points to the immediate instantaneous vision of the totality of the given, from which conscious perception is to be understood as a selection, so pure memory points to the assumption that

"our entire personality, with the totality of our recollections, is present, undivided within our actual perception."<sup>224</sup>

Conscious perception is thus a double process of selection. There is first that selection from the totality of the given which is operated by the body in itself when it calls up the selection of response at its disposal, thus organising the "corporal schema", and simultaneously the mind selects those images appropriate to the occasion and projects, organises them into a "dynamic schema". This projection into the world of the completed perception creates "our world", that is, the world organized and constituted in terms of our intentions. Thus, "my world" is not simply the world as it is in itself, nor is it a construction out of subjective "impressions". The difference between my world as perceived and the world as it is in itself is in terms of selection, a difference not of kind but of the part to the whole.

Now it cannot be pretended that all of this is clear even in Bergson's terms, or that Bergson has supplied or suggested answers to all the problems of memory and perception. What is important however is to see that these problems are set in a different light when approached from the standpoint of the immediate experience of the acting body-subject. For though pure memory and pure perception may be only limiting notions to which no state or experience actually corresponds, they enable us to see conscious perception, the "presence" of the self in the world, as being the point at which memory and matter, body and mind, the temporal order and the spatial, are fused in an irreducible immediate experience. Certainly/..

Certainly not all of the world, or all of the content of memory is present to perception or consciousness, but the actual content of these is now seen as a diminution of what is virtually given or present. It is not too much to say that for Bergson the problem of perception is not that of how the perceived world is built up out of sensations, but of how the perceived world is extracted from the totality of the whole which is in principle given. Similarly the problem of memory is not that of how we reach back to or recall that which is past, but of how we single out from the whole past which is given that which we choose to remember. The brain, which actualizes consciousness,

"appears to us to be an instrument of analysis in regard to the movement received, and an instrument of selection in regard to the movement executed."<sup>225</sup>

It is true that many of the logical and psychological problems associated with memory and perception reappear, though perhaps in a different form, on this view, but it does seem that there is a significant difference. Pure memory is a radical and explicit form of the assumption implicit in most theories of memory, that of some kind of acquaintance with the past or at least some continuity of the past with the present. Thus even Ryle's "having learned and not forgotten" interpretation of memory implies this assumption. When this is made explicit, and regarded as implied by immediate experience, then such a formulation of the problem of memory is that of Russell<sup>226</sup> simply does not arise. Russell regards the very existence of the past which we purport to remember as itself not logically necessary. All our memories, memory images etc. are present experiences, and nothing in them logically guarantees the pastness of the experience to which they are referred, or indeed the existence of any past whatever. This Bergson would regard as a prime example of the "spatialising" illusion discussed in Time and Free Will.  
We/..

We are immediately aware of duration, it is the stuff of consciousness so that doubt about the existence of the past can only be the result of imposing upon the immediate experience of duration the mental diagram of spatialized time which we can divide at will.

The assumption of pure memory is not necessary for this kind of refutation of Russell's argument. E.J. Furlong for instance, finds the guarantee of "pastness" in the same kind of way in the experience of the specious present, which is an experience "in which duration can be perceived."<sup>227</sup> The temporal relation is thus given in immediate experience, and we extrapolate from this to the obvious past.

"We assign dates to past events mainly by inference and record; but there is some direct apprehension of duration, and it is this that gives the primary meaning of the temporal interval between two events."<sup>228</sup>

Given the experience of conscious duration as supplying the primary meaning of temporality and therefore of pastness however, Bergson's pure memory, as an assumption or working hypothesis, further exposes the triviality of some discussions of memory which are not as radically agnostic as Russell's.

The common objection, not only to theories as radical as that which affirms the preservation of the whole past in memory but even to a "common-sense" doctrine such as that of Moore,<sup>229</sup> is that they do not account for the occasions when we forget or "misremember". Moore affirms that we know for certain many things about the past just as we know for certain many things about the present, though we may not be able to say precisely how we know.

Now it is a legitimate demand that some account should be given of the difference between veridical and mistaken "remembering", but the fact/..



fact that we frequently forget or can be shown to be mistaken in what we say we remember does not imply, and there is no reason why it should suggest, that we never can know whether we remember at all. Yet this is the conclusion for example of such a study of the problem of memory as that of W. von Leyden. His recent book Remembering has as its main conclusion that even when a given memory belief is true; i.e. when it can be shown by independent evidence that events occurred as the person claiming to remember reports them, when it can further be shown that he was in a position to have observed these events as reported and was capable of remembering them; none the less this does not establish that the true belief in question is a true memory belief.

Von Leyden appeals to what he calls the "childhood test case". This is the often observed phenomenon of a person's being able to "recall", even to visualise, certain events of his childhood which he was at the time in a position to have observed as reported, yet in spite of all corroboration of the reports we are still not willing to accept that the events in question are actually remembered rather than built up out of subsequent reports of others, further acquaintance with the place or persons involved and so on.

"The problem of memory, as I see it, is not so much whether the fact remembered happened, so that, if it did our memory of it would in this sense be correct; as whether if it did exist there is a continuous connexion between it and a corresponding present memory belief; .... whether our beliefs about the past are true memory beliefs, not just true beliefs."<sup>230</sup>

Von Leyden contends that no such evidence of a continuous connexion is forthcoming, and that therefore it is always possible to doubt that a memory is a memory.

It is not suggested that we must resort to the assumption of the integral/..

integral conservation of the past in order to refute such arguments as these. There are unexamined assumptions centring round the demand for a "continuous connexion" between an event and the memory of it, and it might be argued that nothing but a direct perceptual acquaintance with the past could satisfy von Leyden's complex and stringent criteria for true memory belief, so that his argument would be little more than another way of saying that the past is not the present. Whether this is so or not, the conclusion as quoted is trivial enough, and it is quoted here only to suggest that the problem which can lead to this sort of conclusion might more usefully be stated in a different way.

For what is significant in Bergson's approach to the problem of memory is not whether we remember or not - and a fortiori it is not whether we remember we are really remembering - but how we remember. The hypothesis of integral conservation of the past in memory still leaves room for forgetting and for error. Error may be the result of misperception in the first instance, but it may also be due to malfunction of what Bergson would call the actualization of pure memory in the memory image, in word or in action.

It has been noted that the hypothesis of total conservation has some kind of supporting evidence in the recall of apparently wholly forgotten material through hypnosis, under certain drugs, and even by psycho-analytic techniques, though it is difficult to see how the hypothesis could ever, logically or empirically, be proved. There is support also for Bergson's distinction between pure memory and its actualization in word or image from the facts of aphasia. The loss of the use of a word, action, or concept in a given context does not apparently mean that it is totally "lost", for it may be correctly used in another context. Thus though it would be too much to say that Bergson has made clear the notion/..

notion of pure memory and its distinction from memory-image and motor functions, his ideas do provide some kind of conceptual framework for experiment, and perhaps more important, a way of avoiding some of the more sterile varieties of philosophical discussion of remembering.

Similar things could be said about Bergson's account of perception. It was noted earlier that the idea of pure perception is meant to establish contact with the extended image of the external world. Perception is objective. Extensity is part of our immediate experience. But pure perception is not the whole of perception. It is at most a statement of some of the basic conditions of perception. There are other conditions. Actual perception is to be understood only as a fusion of memory and perception. Thus though we are in principle in the world, in immediate contact with it, what we actually perceive is a function not only of the material conditions of our perception - the position of the body, acuity of the sensory apparatus, light, distance and so on - but also of its psychic condition. By this is meant primarily our intentions. Perception is to be understood in terms of action, and not as pure knowledge. The perceived world is a selection from the whole given in terms of our virtual action upon it. What all this means is that here also, as in the case of memory, error and incompleteness in perception can be accounted for even on the hypothesis that due to the basis of pure perception, we are in our perception in immediate contact with extended objects.

Bergson's theory of perception however is not worked out in detail, and most of the questions which exercise contemporary thought are not touched on. What can be said however is that Bergson rejects any kind of phenomenalist or sense-data approach which would reduce or transpose our descriptions of extended objects to descriptions of "sensations". It/..

It is true that pure perception is impossible not only because perception must be impregnated with memory, but also because the body is not a mathematical point. This means that its "virtual actions", or perceptions, "are complicated by and impregnated with real actions" - which are sensations - "or, in other words, that there is no perception without affection". But sensation or affection is to be subtracted if we are to get at the purity of the perceived image. What is perceived is not constructed from sensation.

"The truth is that affection is not the primary matter of which perception is made; it is rather the impurity with which it is alloyed."<sup>231</sup>

This is not very satisfactory in the absence of any instructions as to what kind of a process the "subtraction" of sensation would be, but there is no point in going into the various lacunae of Bergson's theory of perception. He is mainly concerned to point to the difficulties in constructing a theory of perception beginning from an aggregate of unextended sensations, and to suggest that instead of beginning from these with their familiar difficulties, we begin instead from the immediate experience of the active self-in-the-world.

It is with this immediate experience of the self as a centre of action that we are primarily concerned rather than with the problems of memory and perception in themselves. For it is this immediate experience, which comprises not only the embodied self, but the extended world in its temporal and spatial aspects, given in the experience of extensity and duration, which is central in Bergson's account of the nature of knowledge. The exposition of the themes of Matter and Memory have given some indication of how this immediate experience is to be understood but the elaboration of this idea of the self as centre-of-action/..

action as the central referent for our understanding of knowledge must be left until after the development of the distinction between intelligence and intuition found chiefly in the Introduction to Meta-Physics and Creative Evolution.

CHAPTER IIIINTELLIGENCE AND INTUITIONI.1 - The Genesis of the Idea of Intuition

The notion of "intuition" is one of the best-known of Bergson's doctrines, and the word is used even by the author himself to characterise his whole thought.<sup>232</sup> It is the idea of intuition however which has lent itself most frequently and perhaps most seriously to the misinterpretation of Bergson. Part of this misinterpretation is due to inconsistency and vagueness in Bergson's own teaching, but charges of mysticism and anti-intellectualism probably owe more to the ill-defined pejorative connotations of words like "intuition" than to any detailed study of Bergson's work.<sup>233</sup>

It is therefore important to pay particular attention to Bergson's own use of the idea, and to its development in his works. It was noted earlier<sup>234</sup> that though intuition came to be the characteristic doctrine of Bergson, it was not his point of departure. The word hardly appears before the Introduction to Metaphysics,<sup>235</sup> and even there Bergson hesitated before committing himself to the use of the term, feeling that

"of all the terms which designate a mode of knowing, it is still the most appropriate; and yet it leads to a certain confusion."<sup>236</sup>

Though however the idea of intuition as a way of knowing and a philosophical method was not set out till the essay on metaphysics - of which it is the central theme - it is a development from the conclusion of his earliest work and in particular from the notion of duration. Part of the function of the preceding chapters has been to indicate this development. It is more than usually important for the understanding of/..



of Bergson's leading ideas to know something of their genesis. In the case of "intuition" in particular, because of the vagueness inherent in the word itself, it is essential to understand the primary intention behind its use and the history of the successive refinements of meaning given to it.

In the essay on Time and Free Will, the word "intuition" does not appear to have any specific philosophical sense, or at least, no sense which is peculiar to Bergson.

"The word was used there, again in conformity with current philosophical usage, to indicate the confused apperception of a multitude of elements in a single act, which is characteristic of the representation of space and number."<sup>237</sup>

In Matter and Memory the word is used more often to indicate immediate consciousness of duration, but even here other expressions are employed - e.g. immediate consciousness, immediate experience, immediate perception etc. - which seem to be synonymous.<sup>238</sup> It is in the Introduction to Metaphysics that the word emerges as something other than the natural expression to indicate any kind of immediate consciousness or knowledge, and becomes rather the name of a philosophical method which is implied by a specific philosophical doctrine - that doctrine which defines being in terms of duration.<sup>239</sup>

The object of the Introduction to Metaphysics is to show the possibility and legitimacy of metaphysics, which is to be understood as the knowledge of things-in-themselves. This means that Bergson is undertaking a kind of critique of the Kantian and later philosophy. This is not of course done in detail, the Introduction in fact adds nothing new to Bergson's philosophy, but what it does is to set out systematically the conclusions of the two previous works and to indicate their significance for philosophy in general and for the theory of knowledge in particular/..

particular. Bergson's exposition follows his customary method of sharp distinction and contrast, in this case the contrast between what he believes to be the two generally recognised ways of knowing a thing by "analysis" from without and by "sympathy" from within.

The first way, which is what we more usually call "knowing", is knowledge as it were from "outside" the thing. This knowledge is what we express in concept and symbol, and is established by analysis and comparison. This kind of knowledge Bergson argues, must always remain a relative knowledge. The very language, concepts, symbols we use express our knowledge of the thing in terms of what it has in common with other things, i.e. in terms of what it is not. The possibility of metaphysics, however, assumes a kind of knowledge which seizes its object directly and from within. This knowledge will seize upon the thing as it is in itself, and not merely "know" it through the medium of these features which it has in common with other things. It is this kind of knowledge, of immediate sympathy with the object, that Bergson wishes to call intuition.

"By intuition is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible."<sup>240</sup>

Now it is just this kind of knowledge which Bergson believes he has shown to be possible in his previous works - in Time and Free Will for the self and its duration, and for matter itself in Matter and Memory.

Though Bergson makes no explicit reference to his previous books it is important to bear them in mind, particularly the latter. For it is there that we see that the distinction Bergson is trying to make does not arise simply from a difference of subject-matter - "analysis" being more appropriate/..

appropriate to material objects and intuition to psychological realities. This may be true as a tendency, and even in Creative Evolution Bergson begins with this kind of contrast.

"The human intellect feels at home among inanimate objects, more especially among solids, where our action finds its fulcrum and our industry its tools; our concepts have been formed on the model of solids; our logic is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids; consequently, our intellect triumphs in geometry, wherein is revealed the kinship of logical thought with unorganized matter .... But from this it must also follow that our thought, in its purely logical form, is incapable of presenting the true nature of life."<sup>241</sup>

But it is impossible to maintain a radical distinction between these two spheres of the animate and the inanimate and the ways of knowing which correspond to them. No full account can be given even of the inorganic in purely quantitative terms. Bergson tried to show in Matter and Memory how quality and quantity approach one another in the notion of tension, and as early as Time and Free Will it was shown how a purely mathematical "spatialized" account of motion is self-contradictory. Intuition and analysis, or "intuition and intelligence" as Creative Evolution will use the terms, are indeed different and indeed in some senses opposed things, and it suits Bergson's expository method to use their contrasts to explain them; but it should be noted from the outset that the method of exposition must not obscure how each method uses the other. Intuition is not irrational, if metaphysics is to be, as the last line of the Introduction claims, "integral experience" then it must be more and not less rigorous than science.

"It is reality itself, in the profoundest meaning of the word, that we reach by the combined and progressive development of science and philosophy."<sup>242</sup>

Bergson's/..

Bergson's method then, he believes to be called for, and justified by, the conclusions of his first two works. Though there is no reference to the books, he sets out these results as the basic principle of a metaphysics which will go beyond the criticism of the Kantian philosophy.<sup>243</sup>

There is first a reality that is external and yet given immediately to the mind, but this reality is mobility.<sup>244</sup> That is, it is not things or states, which are given to the perceiving mind, but becoming and tendency. The meaning of this is best understood by a consideration of the reality of conscious duration, whose "moments" are not external to one another but are to be grasped as a whole in their continuous flux. This psychological reality may serve as a model for our understanding even of matter. All reality is tendency.<sup>245</sup> But our mind, whose function is to serve our capacity for action, normally represents reality by stable, solid perceptions and concepts. However convenient this representation of a world of stable objects may be for our action, it misses the essence of the real.

"The inherent difficulties of metaphysics, the antinomies which it gives rise to, and the contradictions into which it falls, the division into antagonistic schools and the irreducible opposition between systems, are largely the result of our applying to the disinterested knowledge of the real, processes which we generally employ for practical ends."<sup>246</sup>

In particular the denial by the critical philosophy of ability to attain knowledge of "things-in-themselves", or the "absolute" is correct if knowledge is only by way of fixed concepts, for there are no means of reconstructing the mobility of the real with fixed concepts.<sup>247</sup> But Bergson's "discovery" of duration, mobility, change, as the reality of consciousness, and the extension of this to characterize reality as a whole, has not only revealed the limitations of our normal habit of mind, but/..

but has also indicated the possibility of a kind of knowledge which would not be subject to these limitations. By the same kind of intellectual sympathy by which it apprehends the reality of its own continuous existence, the self which endures, it can place itself within the mobility of the real. This is intuition, the kind of knowledge appropriate to metaphysics.

"To philosophize is to invert the habitual direction of the work of thought."<sup>248</sup>

Though it takes a conscious effort of reflection to realise the fact, it is upon such intuition that our knowledge of our own conscious selves is based, and it is to such intuition that we owe all great discoveries in science as well as in metaphysics. This is overlooked because any intuition, if it is to be in any sense useful,

"once attained, must find a mode of expression and of application which conforms to the habits of our thought, and one which furnishes us, in the shape of well-defined concepts, with the solid point of support which we so greatly need."<sup>249</sup>

It is the confusion, in one way or another, between such concepts or symbols and the basic intuition which they express or apply which is Bergson's fundamental criticism of both ancient and modern philosophy. For Plato, the belief which Bergson says is natural to the human mind in the priority of the stable over the changing, the fixed over the moving, became a basic principle.

"The whole of the philosophy which begins with Plato and culminates in Plotinus is the development of a principle which may be formulated thus: 'There is more in the immutable than in the moving, and we pass from the stable to the unstable by a simple diminution'. Now the contrary is the truth."<sup>250</sup>

In modern science the error has been not to treat the immutable as/..



as logically and ontologically prior to the changing but rather to confuse one with the other. By its experimental method, science, and therefore the metaphysics associated with it, places itself at once in the mobility of the real. But

"men of science have mainly fixed their attention on the concepts with which they have marked out the pathway of intuition. The more they laid stress on these residual products, which have turned into symbols, the more they attributed a symbolic character to every kind of science. And the more they believed in the symbolic character of science, the more did they indeed make science symbolical. Gradually they have blotted out all difference, in positive science, between the natural and the artificial, between the data of immediate intuition and the enormous work of analysis which the understanding pursues round intuition. Thus they have prepared the way for a doctrine which affirms the relativity of all our knowledge. But metaphysics has also laboured to the same end."<sup>251</sup>

It is to science and metaphysics conceived in this manner that the Kantian criticism applies.

"It is valid against a metaphysic which claims to give us a single and complete system of things, against a science professing to be a single system of relation; .... If metaphysics claims to be made up of concepts which were ours before its advent, if it consists in an ingenious arrangement of pre-existing ideas which we utilise as building material for an edifice .... it becomes artificial. And if science is wholly a work of analysis or of conceptual representation, if experience is only to serve therein as a verification for 'clear ideas', if ..... it professes to be a vast mathematic, a single and closed-in system of relations, imprisoning the whole of reality in a network prepared in advance, it becomes a knowledge purely relative to the human understanding."<sup>252</sup>

Kant himself held to this ideal of a universal mathematics. The main task of the Critique was to lay the foundation for it,

"that/..



"that is, to determine what the intellect must be, and what the object, in order that an uninterrupted mathematic may bind them together. And it follows that if all possible experience is then assured of admittance into the rigid and already constituted framework of our understanding (unless we assume a pre-established harmony) our understanding itself organizes nature and finds itself reflected in it as in a mirror. Hence the possibility of science, which owes all its efficacy to its relativity, and the impossibility of metaphysics."<sup>253</sup>

This interpretation of Kant is found first in the report of the discussion at the meeting of the Société de Philosophie of the 2nd May 1901,<sup>254</sup> expanded as in the quotations above in the Introduction to Metaphysics, and reproduced in its essentials in Creative Evolution.<sup>255</sup> His criticism of Kant serves to make clearer the point of departure of his own philosophical method. This criticism turns chiefly on the account given by the Critical philosophy of the distinction between the matter and the form of our knowledge of the world; the nature of the distinction between phenomenon and noumenon, and hence of the "possibility of science and the impossibility of metaphysics".

Bergson says that the fundamental error is that of accepting the postulate upon which the whole Critique of Pure Reason is based, namely,

"that our intellect is incapable of anything but Platonising; that is of pouring all possible experience into pre-existing moulds."<sup>256</sup>

The root of this difference of Bergson from Kant is in the view taken of the nature of time and space and of our awareness of them. For Kant time and space are the a priori forms of our sensibility. That is, the primary intuition of the sensuous manifold ... which is the only source of our knowledge, is already the product of an operation of our mind beyond which it is impossible for us to reach to grasp the real as it is in itself. Perception/..

Perception therefore gives us a world of appearances, which is in some sense distinct from the real world which it hides from us. But Bergson affirms in Time and Free Will that our idea of time, our representation of it to ourselves, rests upon, though it does not properly translate, a basic intuition of duration, which is interior to things as it is to ourselves; and further that though this basic intuition cannot be represented in symbol or concept, yet it is possible for us by an effort to seize it in its original purity. It is indeed this basic intuition which is the central referent which gives meaning to our concepts and language. Space itself, as Bergson argued particularly in Matter and Memory, is a kind of ideal schema rather than an objective reality. Our representation of space is an expression of the essential property or tendency of matter.<sup>257</sup>

Thus for Bergson also there is a distinction between "things-in-themselves" and those things as they are given in our normal perception, but the distinction is not the same as the Kantian one. The noumenon for Bergson is discovered, grasped within the phenomenon, not hidden by it. Our normal habits of mind distort our apprehension of reality in perception and in concept, but it is possible also, by becoming conscious of these habits, to go behind them and to return to the original intuition which is solidified, broken up, and therefore misrepresented by them.

"Relative" and "absolute" knowledge are given a different sense.

For Bergson

"our usual knowledge and our scientific knowledge, which prolongs it, will still be relative knowledge; but they will no longer be, in the strict sense, knowledge of the relative."<sup>258</sup>

Our perceptions and concepts are, in another of Bergson's figures, views or snapshots of reality. They may therefore be as true to what they represent/..

represent as views or pictures can be, but no one of them, nor any sum of them, can give reality as it is in itself. But this reality which is available to intuition is nevertheless not something distinct from, other than, that which is given in appearance, but is rather reached by the effort to free the mind from these partial views.

The word "partial" is not to be misunderstood. A partial view is not a view of a part. Bergson distinguishes between the parts and the elements or expressions of a thing.<sup>259</sup> In the case of the self for instance, psychology may analyze the whole into sensations, sentiments and so on which can be separately studied. But these "elements" are not just "parts" of the personality in the sense that it could be built up by a sum of them. Each separate psychological state reflects the whole personality. As Bergson has shown in his exposition of the notion of conscious duration in Time and Free Will, it is only by abstraction and analysis that we can isolate and solidify any moment of the flux of conscious duration into a "state", while the reality of the whole is only grasped in an intuition.

Now since Bergson extends the distinction between knowledge by intuition and knowledge by analysis from the sphere of psychology to that of knowledge in general, the distinction between "appearance" and "reality" of any object of knowledge is to be interpreted also by analogy with the distinction between the "moments" or "states" of personality and the moving reality of conscious duration. These moments are expressions of the whole - which are neither wholly other than it nor an adequate substitute for it. In a letter written more than ten years after the Introduction to Metaphysics, Bergson refers to the misunderstanding of his teaching on this point.

"Furthermore/..

"Furthermore it is not correct that I admit the existence of an absolute reality, distinct from appearances, in the manner of the traditional metaphysics. On the contrary, according to me, all that we perceive is an absolute reality. Only, it is a reality which we have more and more to complete by renouncing certain practical habits of contraction (rétrécissement), and philosophy should aim at knowing this reality which is more complete than ordinary reality (but not of another nature than it, since it contains this ordinary reality as the whole contains the part). .... One of the main objects of my work has been to give a solution of this same problem (that of explaining how mathematics is applicable to the world) at less cost than Kant without assuming 'things-in-themselves' distinct from phenomena, showing that phenomena, taken in their integrality - that is to say replaced in 'real duration' - are truly an absolute - this absolute being then of such a nature that, necessarily, it lends itself to intellectual knowledge when it is matter, and to intuitive knowledge when it is life or spirit."<sup>260</sup>

The last phrase of this quotation raises clearly the question to which Creative Evolution gives an answer, that of the full extent and meaning of the distinction between intellect and intuition. This distinction we have seen to be suggested by differences of subject matter - for example the difference between psychological realities and material bodies inevitably make differences in the way in which they can be known.

The "discovery" of conscious duration suggested to Bergson the method of intuition peculiarly appropriate to the apprehension of this duration. But we have also seen that the distinction between these ways of knowing is not wholly to be explained in terms of the differences between the realities characteristically known by them. It is also a distinction between two different conceptions of intelligibility. Bergson himself makes this point in the discussion of the Société de Philosophie already referred to in his answer to a criticism.<sup>261</sup>

"The/..

"The intelligibility of an idea can only be measured by the richness of what it suggests, by the extent, the fertility and sureness of its application, by the growing number of articulations of the real which, as it were, it permits us to lay bare, in short by its interior energy."

This is why a modern notion of intelligibility - of meaning or explanation - cannot be the same in detail as that for instance of the Cartesians, for

"their criterion of intelligibility was much more empirical than they thought. It corresponded to a complete examination in depth of their particular experience. But our experience is much vaster. It has enlarged to the point where we have, for almost a century past, had to give up the hope of a universal mathematics. New sciences have been constituted on this very basis, sciences which observe and experiment without ever aiming to arrive at a mathematical formula. Intelligibility thus extends itself to new notions, themselves also suggested by experience."<sup>262</sup>

With this dynamic notion of intelligibility, whereby it consists in a kind of inner power or fertility in explaining obscurities, there may be contrasted that which defines intelligibility by the intrinsic clarity of ideas, which Bergson says, most often simply means their familiarity. Thus the attempt to found philosophy on ideas which cannot be doubted - or on "clear and distinct" ideas - too often results in reducing the intelligible to a particular order of ideas, a particular kind of clarity and distinctness. This if applied strictly would make impossible any major advance in science itself. Bergson gives as an example the idea of the unconscious, and its fertility for modern psychology, though it was at one time taught even by Bergson himself that the very idea of an unconscious psychological state was a contradiction in terms.

"progress in detail can no doubt be made in the sciences, by the growing verification of principles already accepted: but how could/..



could an important radical scientific advance be made other than by an effort at intellectual dilation, which brings to intelligibility concepts which, up till then, appeared to border on self-contradiction."<sup>263</sup>

Thus Bergson's method of intuition, which will redefine and enlarge the boundaries of the intelligible, far from renouncing scientific rigour, proposes rather to enable philosophy to understand scientific advances already made.

"You have spoken of the mystics. If you understand by mysticism (as one almost always does today) a reaction against positive science, the doctrine which I am defending is from beginning to end nothing but a protest against mysticism, since it proposes to re-establish the bridge (broken since Kant) between metaphysics and science .... Let us ask ourselves if our metaphysics is not irreconcilable with science simply because it lags behind science, being the metaphysic of a rigid science, in mathematical terms, the science which flourished from Descartes to Kant, whereas the science of the nineteenth century has seemed to aspire to a much more supple form, and not always to take mathematics as its model."<sup>264</sup>

"We must break with the mathematical limits, take account of the biological, psychological, sociological sciences, and on this wider basis erect a metaphysics ...."<sup>265</sup>

## I.2 - The Intuition of Life

In Creative Evolution, published in 1907, Bergson laid his foundation for such a metaphysics. His method is understood by reference once more to his earlier works. The practical orientation of our ordinary habits of mind, first suggested in Time and Free Will was one of the postulates and one of the main conclusions of Matter and Memory.<sup>266</sup> The first page of the Introduction to Creative Evolution states once more that the "faculty of understanding is an appendage of the faculty of acting"/..



acting", this time as a scientific conclusion of the study of evolution of life, in particular the study of the development of intellect up to man. Again, this working postulate is to be one of the conclusions of the book.<sup>267</sup>

If this is true, that intellect, that the form of our knowledge, is shaped by the exigencies of organic life, then it will follow that a full account of knowledge and mind must set them in the context of the whole life of the organism. Conversely, in giving any account or theory of life itself we must be at least highly critical of the concepts and symbols we use, since when our understanding seeks to comprehend the meaning of life itself, the part is attempting to grasp or contain the whole.

"This amounts to saying that theory of knowledge and theory of life seem to us inseparable. A theory of knowledge that is not accompanied by a criticism of knowledge is obliged to accept, as they stand, the concepts which the understanding puts at its disposal ...."

"On the other hand, a theory of knowledge which does not replace the intellect in the general evolution of life will teach us neither how the frames of knowledge have been constructed nor how we can enlarge or go beyond them. It is necessary that these two inquiries, theory of knowledge and theory of life, should join each other, and by a circular process, push each on unceasingly."<sup>268</sup>

If this inquiry is to have the scientific rigour and produce the assured results that Bergson requires, it must base itself upon science, in this case the science of biology. In his first two chapters Bergson first examines the two explanations currently given of the whole evolutionary progress - mechanism and finalism - and, finding these unsatisfactory, goes on to re-examine the lines of evolution which these theories are intended to explain.

We are not in this enquiry particularly concerned with the detail of Bergson's criticisms of current evolutionary theory, nor even with his positive suggestion for an alternative theory, except in so far as this criticism and these positive suggestions serve to illustrate and to develop his doctrines of intelligence and intuition. It is true that no one is more aware than Bergson of the intimate connection between the content of any theory of life, mind, or matter and the method adopted in arriving at the theory, but this connection is not so close as to be necessary, and it is possible to discuss the logical features of Bergson's method of intuition without being committed to the acceptance or rejection of all of his metaphysics.

Bergson's critical work has consisted essentially in the rejection of any mechanistic, mathematical model for the interpretation of the self, of conscious duration. He has tried to show how conscious existence and even matter are to be viewed when this intuition of duration is taken as basic, and he now raises the question of the relation of this discovery to the interpretation of life and of the world as a whole.

"For a conscious being to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly. Should the same be said of existence in general?"<sup>269</sup>

Now it was noted in Time and Free Will and again in Matter and Memory that the perception of material objects, our division of the world into particulars - is relative to the basic function of physical life, which is to serve the needs of action. All reality is mobility and change, but for us to be able to act at all we must as it were cut out in this continuous flux stable objects and systems upon which we can act. Not that such bodies and systems are wholly relative to the structure of our minds.

"Matter has a tendency to constitute isolable systems that can be treated geometrically. In fact, we shall define matter by just this tendency."<sup>270</sup>

This tendency of the mind to fix, stabilise the objects of thought is however more obviously misleading in some cases than in others. Time and Free Will showed how it was inapplicable to psychological realities, to the phenomena of conscious existence, but it is not only consciousness whose nature the mechanistic habit of mind is unable to grasp, but life itself. This is shown by seeing how a material body is unlike, logically unlike, a living body.

"While the subdivision of matter into separate bodies is relative to our perception, while the building up of closed-off systems of material points is relative to our science, the living body has been separated and closed off by Nature herself. It is composed of unlike parts that complete each other. It performs diverse functions that involve each other. It is an individual."<sup>271</sup>

This individuality of organized systems, of living bodies, is a tendency which is characteristic of life, and by which it is differentiated from the world of matter and material objects. Bergson admits that this individuality is only a tendency, which is not fully realised perhaps even in man. It may be extremely difficult, especially in the case of plants, to distinguish between what is individual and what is not, but in general terms his distinction is clear enough. A material body can be understood as the sum of its "parts" but a living body can not. A living body exhibits differences and diversities of function between its "parts" as a material body does not. This is to say that the mathematical model which will serve to describe a material body will not serve to describe a living one. In the case of a living body duration must be taken into account. Prediction is possible in the physical sciences in a way in which it is not in biology.

"The present state of an unorganized body depends exclusively on what happened at the previous instant ...."

but this is so for an organised living body only

"if/..

"if it is agreed a priori to liken the living body to other bodies, and to identify it, for the sake of the argument, with the artificial system on which the chemist, physicist, and astronomer operate. But in astronomy, physics, and chemistry the proposition has a perfectly definite meaning: it signifies that certain aspects of the present, important for science, are calculable as functions of the immediate past. Nothing of the sort in the domain of life. Here calculation touches, at most, certain phenomena of organic destruction. Organic creation, on the contrary, the evolutionary phenomena which properly constitute life, we cannot in any way subject to a mathematical treatment."<sup>272</sup>

There is no need to follow in detail the evidence Bergson adduces for this thesis from the phenomena of maturation of living organisms and the production of "mutations" in species. For it is important to see that his argument is an epistemological one. He is not making assertions about the possibility or impossibility of any future biochemical discoveries, but about the nature and conditions of our knowledge of living beings.

There appear to be three stages in his argument thus far, or better, three ways in which he expresses substantially the same thought. An organism is to be understood as an individual, as having duration, and as being a continuous creation.

He first points to the fact that biology is possible only on the basis of the recognition of living bodies, organised systems. This is what is meant by saying that the living body is a system "separated and closed off by Nature .... and individual". The individuality of living things sets a limit to the possibility of physical and chemical analysis, for such analysis must always proceed within a context supplied by the given organism. This point has been made recently at considerable length and with much illustration by Professor M. Polanyi in his book Personal Knowledge. Dr M. Grene, in discussing this work, says that by this/..

this primary "aesthetic" recognition of individuals

"I do not mean that at some mysterious point analysis will have to stop, but that an analysis of an organism which analysed the organism away would contradict itself by destroying its own subject matter. Nor do I mean that when we recognise an individual we are adding some mysterious vital something that comes from I know not where, but that we are affirming the existence of something which is more than a brute fact, in the sense that we acknowledge it as an achievement."<sup>273</sup>

There is a limit, that is, to the explanation of the whole in terms of the parts, the limit that is set by the existence of the whole itself, for the "parts" of an organism, its chemical molecules, only are what they are within the given unitary organism.

It may seem that this is no more than saying that explanation must be systematic and comprehensive. But the second stage of Bergson's argument must also be taken into account. For this recognition of the individuality of living organisms implies a recognition of the fact of duration. A living organism endures, that is, exists not simply in mathematical time, whose moments are as it were "given", "interchangeable". The duration of the organism is rather to be interpreted as we saw conscious duration must be. Each "moment" is unique, unrepeatable, in that the "past" of the organism is in some sense "contained in" the present. This does not mean that mechanistic explanation has no place in biology. There is no limit that can be set a priori to the possible discoveries that can be made in bio-chemistry and bio-physics, any more than an arbitrary limit can be set to the advance of neuro-physiology. But it would be as illegitimate in the one case to say that a vital organism had been wholly "explained" in terms of physics and chemistry as in the other case to say that "mind" could be described fully in terms of brain function.

It/..



It is useful to remember the parallel with mind. For although for the purposes of his exposition Bergson makes a sharp distinction between organised and unorganised bodies; life and matter; the intelligence whose model is mathematics and classical mechanics and the intuition whose model is the apprehension of the duration of the conscious self, he is always aware that the distinction is not an absolute one.

"The theoretical reasons which prevent us from likening the living being, a system closed off by nature, to the systems which our science isolates ... have less force, we acknowledge, in the case of a rudimentary organism like the amoeba, which hardly evolves at all. But they acquire more when we consider a complex organism which goes through a regular cycle of transformations. The more duration marks the living being with its imprint, the more obviously the organism differs from a mere mechanism, over which duration glides without penetrating."<sup>274</sup>

Just as, in Time and Free Will, Bergson admitted that there were degrees of freedom even of the conscious self,<sup>275</sup> so there are degrees in which living organisms are characterized by individuality and duration. Further, even though the conscious self is not free all the time or absolutely, freedom is none the less characteristic of human consciousness, which cannot be understood except in terms of it. So also a living being is not to be understood as a mechanism whose functions are repeatable, but as a "unique series of acts that really constitute a history",<sup>276</sup> though the model of a mechanism will be more nearly applicable to the forms of life lowest in the evolutionary scale.

The third expression Bergson employs, that a living being is a continuous creation, is implied in what has been said about individuality and duration. This is seen if Bergson's idea is contrasted not with a mechanistic hypothesis but with finalism. For Bergson, both these doctrines, in their extreme forms, are vitiated by the same error.

"The/..



"The doctrine of teleology, in its extreme form, as we find it in Leibniz for example, implies that things and beings merely realize a programme previously arranged. But if there is nothing unforeseen, no invention or creation in the universe, time is useless again. As in the mechanistic hypothesis, here again it is supposed that all is given. Finalism thus understood is only inverted mechanism."<sup>277</sup>

Bergson's criticism of finalism is less uncompromising than his attack on mechanism. He admits that it can assume many different forms, and that his own doctrine will have some elements of relation to a teleological explanation. What he rejects however is indicated in the quotation above, i.e. any doctrine of a final "cause" or "plan", either for life or as a whole or for individual organisms, which will leave no room for creation, for the emergence of forms, functions, actions which are radically new and unforeseeable.

Now it is Bergson's contention that such concepts as "individuality", "creation", arise out of an empirical study of biological phenomena and the examination of the theories constructed to account for these phenomena. That is, science itself shows the inadequacy of its own methods and concepts to explain fully the facts which it deals with. In Bergson's terms, the methods of analysis, the models and concepts of the intelligence, are not enough, and an intuition must be resorted to to grasp the reality with which we are concerned in the study of life.

No attempt has been here made to show in detail how, in Bergson's view, the phenomena themselves require new concepts, new methods, nor has justice been done to Bergson's criticism of other theories, for we are here concerned principally with Bergson's theory of intuition in itself. Enough has been said however, to indicate that the appeal to intuition is not simply an a priori rejection of "scientific method".  
The/..

The method of intuition, since it is required by the phenomena presented to us, is more, and not less, scientific than the analytical, mathematical intelligence. Mechanism and finalism are rejected because neither can do justice to all that they try to explain. This is because they

"agree in doing away with time. Real duration is that duration which gnaws on things, and leaves on them the mark of its tooth. If everything is in time, everything changes inwardly, and the same concrete reality never recurs. Repetition therefore is possible only in the abstract; what is repeated is some aspect that our senses, and especially our intellect, have singled out from reality, just because our action, upon which all the effort of our intellect is directed, can move only among repetitions. Thus concentrated on that which repeats, solely preoccupied in welding the same to the same, intellect turns away from the vision of time. It dislikes what is fluid, and solidifies everything it touches. We do not think real time, but we live it, because life transcends intellect. The feeling we have of our evolution and of the evolution of all things in pure duration is there, forming around the intellectual concept properly so-called an indistinct fringe that fades off into darkness. Mechanism and finalism agree in taking account only of the bright nucleus shining at the centre. They forget that this nucleus has been formed out of the rest by condensation, and that the whole must be used, the fluid as well as, and more than, the condensed, in order to grasp the inner movement of life."<sup>278</sup>

### I.3 - The Analogy of Instinct

The last quotation serves both to sum up the previous criticism of intelligence and also to introduce the concept which Bergson uses in Creative Evolution to clarify further his notion of intuition. For the "feelings we have of our evolution and of the evolution of all things" the "indistinct fringe" around our intellect, is more akin to instinct than to anything we would normally call intelligence or knowledge. The contrast between instinct and intelligence will serve to show/..

show not only the nature of intelligence and its characteristic achievements, but will also shed further light on its limitations, and will suggest what it is that must be added to intelligence if it is to be adequate for philosophy, capable of the kind of knowledge properly called metaphysical.

We have seen that part of Bergson's fundamental purpose is to set his study of the nature of knowledge in the context of a theory of life, and the background of the contrast between intelligence and instinct is Bergson's own positive suggestion towards the solution of the problem of evolution.

The notion of "elan vital", the original impetus of life, will be more fully examined later, but a sketch of it is required at this point for an understanding of Bergson's argument from the nature of instinct. Bergson's philosophy,

"like radical finalism, although in a vaguer form, .... represents the organized world as a harmonious whole".

This harmony however

"does not exist in fact; it exists rather in principle"

and this not in virtue of the present relations between various orders of nature or different organisms, not because of any common end or purpose towards which life tends;

"harmony is rather behind us than before. It is due to an identity of impulsion and not to a common aspiration."<sup>279</sup>

This postulate of an original impetus of life Bergson believes to be the only way of explaining the facts of biology and palaeontology and of doing justice to the truth contained in the various conflicting accounts of evolution. It can accept the evidence of evolution by adaptation/..

adaptation which is pressed so strongly by a mechanistic view, seeing the emergence and progress of new forms, the continued reproduction without change of others, and the extinction of yet others, in terms of the greater or less success of their methods of adaptation to the conditions of their life. But reference to the common original impetus can help to solve problems which are intractable on a narrowly mechanistic view: for instance the emergence of similar or almost identical complex structures and functions in widely different orders of organism living in widely differing conditions. "Adaptation" can describe only the conditions and the mechanism of the movement of life, but not that movement itself.

"The road that leads to the town is obliged to follow the ups and downs of the hills; it adapts itself to the accidents of the ground; but the accidents of the ground are not the cause of the road, nor have they given it direction."<sup>280</sup>

So also Bergson's hypothesis furnishes an explanation for the unity and harmony of life which finalism emphasises. But it allows for genuine creation, for the emergence of the wholly unforeseen, which is so difficult to reconcile with the notion of a final cause. It avoids the anthropomorphism of finalism, and can take account not only of "harmony" but also of the disharmony of Nature. For

"if life realizes a plan, it ought to manifest a greater harmony the further it advances ... if on the contrary, the unity of life is to be found solely in the impetus that pushes it along the road of time, the harmony is not in front, but behind. The unity is derived from a vis a tergo: it is given at the start as an impulsion, not placed at the end as an attraction."<sup>281</sup>

In similes that have become celebrated, Bergson speaks of life as developing in the form of a sheaf, which creates by its growth divergent directions among which its impetus is divided; and more vividly, of evolution/..

evolution as being not like the progress of a solid ball shot from a cannon, but more

"like a shell, which suddenly bursts into fragments, which fragments, being themselves shells, burst in their turn into fragments destined to burst again, and so on for a time incommensurably long .... When a shell bursts, the particular way it breaks is explained both by the explosive force of the powder it contains and by the resistance of the metal. So of the way life breaks into individuals and species."<sup>282</sup>

The "explosive" in this case is the original impetus of life, and the resistance which not only conditions but expresses, manifests, its power, is that of inert matter.

We shall see that it is by no means always easy to know what is meant by "élan vital". At times it may appear to be no more than a picturesque way of referring to the presumed common origins of all earthly life. At other times it may appear to be a suggestion of a new, and somehow occult "element" in all living things, a kind of biological "ghost in the machine". But even without attempting to characterize how Bergson's idea is related to these two extreme positions, even the outline of its essential features is sufficient to show how it can serve as a principle of interpretation in the study of the problems of evolution. This re-interpretation of the course of evolution will in turn lead to a different kind of approach to the problems of the nature of intelligence, mind and knowledge.

Bergson's definition of life as tendency, and the interpretation of the genealogies of various species as so many directions taken by a single common original "impetus" of life, leads to a particular view of the relations between the different orders of Nature. In keeping with his dynamic definition of life, Bergson refuses to distinguish living forms in terms of their properties.

"Let me say that no definite characteristic distinguishes the plant from the animal. Attempts to define the two kingdoms strictly have always come to naught. There is not a single property of vegetable life that is not found, in some degree, in certain animals: not a single characteristic feature of the animal that has not been seen in certain species or at certain moments in the vegetable world. Naturally, therefore, biologists enamoured of clean-cut concepts have regarded the distinction between the two kingdoms as artificial."<sup>283</sup>

But in the sciences of Life the clear distinctions of mathematical and physical sciences can not be expected. Though no single attribute or property distinguishes the plant from the animal if the whole evolutionary scale is examined, we find it simple enough to use concepts like that of the "animal world" or the "plant world". These attributes which we regard as characteristic of one group are normally only rudimentary or latent in the other.

"In a word, the group must not be defined by the possession of certain characters, but by its tendency to emphasize them.

From this point of view, taking tendencies rather than states into account, we find that vegetables and animals may be precisely defined and distinguished, and that they correspond to two divergent developments of life."<sup>284</sup>

Thus characteristic differences between plants and animals, such as the fact that the vegetable normally derives its nourishment directly from air and water and soil, while the animal normally feeds on organic substances, i.e. plants or other animals, are to be interpreted as divergent tendencies of a function originally one. So too with the tendency of the plant to fixity and the animal to mobility, or that of the plant to unconsciousness or "torpor" and the animal to consciousness. More importantly the inter-relations of these orders of nature, the infinity of relations of interdependence which exist between plants and animals/..



animals and myriads of organisms such as microbes of highly specialized functions, are not only to be explained in terms of mutual adaptation, but also in terms of divergence and diversification of functions originally one. Life proceeds, progresses, not by mutual adaptation and convergence, but by dissociation, diversification and specialization.

"While the primitive vegetable cell had to fix by itself both its carbon and its nitrogen, it became almost able to give up the second of these two functions as soon as the microscopic vegetables came forward which leaned in this direction exclusively, and even specialized diversely in this still complicated business."<sup>285</sup>

These considerations of the evolution of plant and animal life serve to illustrate the point of view from which the contrast of instinct with intelligence will be set out. For we may regard these "faculties" as two subsidiary tendencies or directions within the animal world, and intelligence and instinct at their most developed as the culminating points of such tendencies. Bergson recognises that talk of "culminating points" of directions of evolution may seem to beg a number of questions. He recognises that there is no single or simple criterion by which we may make such a judgement. He suggests however that both in terms of success - i.e. adaptability to the most diverse environments, overcoming of the most diverse obstacles and conditions, establishment over the widest area of the earth's space - and in terms of lateness of development, the ants mark the culminating point in the series of the articulate as homo sapiens does in the series of the vertebrate. We may, that is, point to the insects in particular as the point at which instinct reaches its highest point of development, and to man as the culminating point of intelligence, and use the manifestations of these faculties in part to define and compare their divergent streams of evolution.

Before proceeding to the comparison of instinct with intelligence, it/..

it may be useful at this point to try to sum up the elements of Bergson's view-point thus far.

First, negatively, the interpretation of evolution in terms of divergent tendencies means that we cannot regard such tendencies as having evolved successively from one another.

"The cardinal error which, from Aristotle onwards, has vitiated most of the philosophies of nature, is to see in vegetables, instinctive and rational life, three successive degrees of development of one and the same tendency, whereas they are three divergent directions of an activity that has split up as it grew."<sup>286</sup>

Secondly, the development of the activities of instinct and intelligence are to be regarded as specializations, as refinements of function in a given direction. This progressive specialization proceeds not only by adaptation but also by creation, i.e. the emergence of new structures and functions which carry on and increase this tendency to specialization. Intelligence therefore, no less than instinct, is to be understood in the context of the whole life of the organism, that is, as primarily a faculty of action, rather than a faculty of knowing.

Finally, as a corollary of these points, since intelligence and instinct are developments of a function or faculty originally one, neither can be fully understood without reference to the other. Each indeed, retains something of their common origin in spite of their divergent and in some sense opposite courses of development. We saw that it was impossible to draw a rigid distinction even between the tendencies of plant and animal life.

"So with intelligence and instinct. There is no intelligence in which some traces of instinct are not to be discovered, more especially no instinct that is not surrounded by a fringe of intelligence."<sup>287</sup>

Bergson enters here a caveat which will be important for the understanding of his doctrine of intuition. Though his method here, as always, is that of exposition by the contrast of apparent opposites, the opposition is of tendencies.

"Let us say at the outset that the distinctions we are going to make will be too sharply drawn, just because we wish to define in instinct what is instinctive, and intelligence what is intelligent. Whereas all concrete instinct is mingled with intelligence, as all real intelligence is penetrated by instinct."

The second point supplies the context for the comparison of instinct and intelligence. They are divergent developments or specializations of a single faculty or function, that of action. It is this, the

"faculty of utilizing a releasing mechanism for the conversion of as much stored-up potential energy as possible into explosive actions",<sup>288</sup>

which constitutes animality. The animal is essentially a nervous system, the other systems, respiratory, circulatory, digestive etc. are there to serve it, and the evolutionary progress from the most primitive organisms up to the most intelligent vertebrates or the best-endowed insects has been above all a progress of the nervous system.

Thus the animal is to be defined in terms of its capacity for action, and instinct and intelligence are divergent and contrasting modes of action. This leads in turn to definitions of instinct and intelligence in terms of their characteristic instruments of action on the world. These instruments are of two kinds; the organized instrument, i.e. that which forms part of the body which uses it and which is coupled with an instinct, and the artificial manufactured instrument, the tool proper, which is at once the product of intelligence and the characteristic occasion for its display.

Intelligence/..

Intelligence and instinct are thus modes of action, solutions evolved on separate and diverging lines of evolution to one and the same problem. They both however imply knowledge, and the differences between the kinds of knowledge they imply must be understood.

One of the obvious differences between instinct and intelligence is that instinctive activity tends at least to be unconscious, and intelligence to be conscious. Bergson here makes a distinction between kinds of unconsciousness, between consciousness absent and consciousness nullified. He suggests that we understand those cases in which instinct is unconscious on the analogy of human mechanical or "unconscious" action. We know what it is to perform some habitual action or gesture while being wholly "unaware" of what we are doing. This Bergson suggests, is

"due to the fact that the representation of the act is held in check by the performance of the act itself, which resembles the idea so perfectly, and fits it so exactly, that consciousness is unable to find room between them. Representation is stopped up by action. The proof of this is, that if the accomplishment of the act is arrested or thwarted by an obstacle, consciousness may reappear."<sup>289</sup>

There is no need to analyse in detail Bergson's distinction between two kinds of unconsciousness. His illustration from human "automatic" action makes clear enough the essential point. This is the reiteration in a new context of a point already made in Matter and Memory that consciousness signifies hesitation or choice. In the present context of action, consciousness which implies the representation of "things", only has a function when there is a plurality of possible courses of action. Where only one course of action is possible it is performed automatically, and consciousness, at its limit, is reduced to nothing. Consciousness arises out of the insufficiency of instinct to its ends, the thwarting to/..

to which it is subject. If then instinct and intelligence, viewed as modes of action upon the world, one by organized bodily instruments, the other by manufacured artificial tools, both still involve knowledge, this knowledge will be

"rather acted and unconscious in the case of instinct, thought and conscious in the case of intelligence."<sup>290</sup>

If the notion of "unconscious knowledge" seems a gratuitous paradox it should be recalled once more that the contrasts Bergson is drawing here are not between wholly different things but between limiting cases of a unitary phenomenon, diverging tendencies of an activity essentially one. "Representation" permits of all degrees, from the most general and abstract concepts of the human intelligence through the ideo-motor responses of habit, to the motor sketch or schema of a series of systematized movements which form the "unconscious" responses to a stimulus. The real importance of the notion of "nullified consciousness" is perhaps to emphasize that for Bergson consciousness and representation are elastic notions of this sort.

The essential difference between instinct and intelligence however becomes more clear when we consider the objects upon which they are directed. It is characteristic of those animals in whom instinct is highly developed that they can display patterns of behaviour of the sort which in another context we should call highly skilled or intelligent, and yet show no evidence of intelligence at all when confronted with the simplest obstacles in unfamiliar situations. When for instance,

"a paralysing wasp stings its victim on just those points where the nervous centres lie, so as to render it motionless without killing, it acts like a learned entomologist and a skilful surgeon rolled into one."<sup>291</sup>

There/...

There are countless other cases - particularly among parasites, whose behaviour, whose whole life-cycle, is often modelled upon the habits or functions of the host - where instinctive behaviour appears to have the characteristically intelligent features of "directedness", or anticipation. But instinct differs from intelligence in this, that the power of dealing intelligently with one situation does not imply the power of dealing with another of similar complication. Bergson expresses this by saying that

"whatever, in instinct and intelligence, is innate knowledge, bears in the first case on things and in the second on relations."<sup>292</sup>

This phraseology is not meant to re-open the classical controversy about "innate ideas". All that is meant is that instinctive behaviour is an unlearned response, which given a sufficient degree of exactitude and automatism in its working, can be regarded as a kind of knowledge - implicit rather than explicit, acted and unconscious rather than thought and conscious - of a thing, the specific object of its operation. Intelligence on the other hand, knows nothing directly in this sense, but is rather a faculty of understanding relations; the relation between one thing and another, between a sound and an object such that the sound becomes its name, between a situation and the means of using it. This is the mathematical "spatializing" intellect or habit of mind already familiar from Time and Free Will, which neglects the individual, the moving, the real, to concentrate on the general, the immobile and discontinuous, the symbol which for thought takes the place of the real itself.

We are not here concerned with the adequacy of Bergson's whole account of animal instinct. The point of the comparison and contrast is that it seems to point beyond either of its terms to a kind of knowledge which will include elements of both. For instinct is inexplicable in/..



in terms of intelligence. We cannot explain what the paralysing wasp does either in terms of intelligent action or of mechanism, but this does not mean that we cannot in any way comprehend the acted implicit "knowledge" the wasp has of its victim. This is difficult to state in clear language, indeed it is part of Bergson's argument that it is difficult if not impossible to do so since our language and our thinking function so much in terms of the general concepts of the intellect. "Awareness" of an object for us seems necessarily to imply some sense of self-awareness of the subject over against the object; "knowledge" of an object is for us almost unthinkable except in terms of relations. Nothing would be simpler than to demonstrate by a logical analysis the vacuity of Bergson's phrases about the wasp's "unconscious knowledge" or its awareness of a thing but not of the thing's relation to any other thing. Yet he contends,

"in the phenomena of feeling, in unreflecting sympathy and antipathy, we experience in ourselves - though under a much vaguer form, and one too much penetrated with intelligence - something of what must happen in the consciousness of an insect acting by instinct."<sup>293</sup>

The point here is not that we should ask ourselves whether or not we can imagine ourselves as wasps. The analogy of instinct - though Bergson means it to be something more than an analogy - is meant to lead us to the notion of an intuition free from the limitations of instinct.

"Instinct is sympathy. If this sympathy could extend its object and also reflect upon itself, it would give us the key to vital operations - just as intelligence, developed and disciplined, guides us into matter. For - we cannot too often repeat it - intelligence and intuition are turned in opposite directions, the former towards inert matter, the latter towards life. Intelligence,/. .

Intelligence, by means of science, which is its work, will deliver up to us more and more completely the secret of physical operations; of life it brings us, and moreover only claims to bring us, a translation in terms of inertia. It goes all round life taking from outside the greatest possible number of views of it, drawing it into itself instead of entering into it. But it is to the very inwardness of life that intuition leads us - by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely."<sup>294</sup>

Intuition enlarged or deepened, or rather the union of this intuition with intelligence, has now been repeatedly suggested as a philosophical method, as indeed the only possible basis for metaphysics. It was first suggested by the discovery of conscious duration as the basis of all experience. It was seen to be required for the proper understanding of memory and the problem of the union of mind and body. Intuition was seen further to be involved in the bare apprehension of the phenomena of life, and some illustration of its nature as well as a suggestion about its genesis have been given in the comparison of instinct and intelligence. If the method of intuition is necessary for the apprehension of such realities as duration and change, life and consciousness, then metaphysics, which claims to give an account of these as of other realities, must employ this method. The question of how intuition or metaphysical knowledge is possible is best treated by an examination first, of its object; i.e. how are we to think of "reality", the "world as a whole", the unity of our experience, and secondly, of how this knowledge is to be expressed, given that the concepts and symbols of the intelligence distort the reality they are meant to represent. It is extremely difficult to disentangle and consider separately in this way the "object" of intuition from the method of its expression, not only because of the intractability of the subject matter, but also because/..

because Bergson comes near to affirming that they cannot be disentangled, but even the attempt to do so will set out most clearly the essence of his theory and prepare the way for a critical review of Bergson's epistemology.

#### I.4 - The Object of Intuition

We have seen that the foundation of Bergson's theory of knowledge, and indeed of all of his thought, is the immediate awareness we have of our conscious duration. It was the discovery of this reality, and the exposure of the inadequacy of intelligence to comprehend or express it, which led to the rejection of intelligence and conceptual thinking as an adequate tool or method for metaphysical enquiry. It is the misapplication of intelligence which is at the root of most metaphysical systems, for they share

"two convictions correlative and complementary, that nature is one and that the function of intellect is to embrace it in its entirety. The faculty of knowing being supposed coextensive with the whole of experience, there can no longer be any question of engendering it. It is already given, and we merely have to use it, as we use our sight to take in the horizon. It is true that opinions differ as to the value of the result. For some, it is reality itself that the intellect embraces; for others, it is only a phantom. But phantom or reality, what intelligence grasps is thought to be all that can be attained."<sup>295</sup>

Bergson challenges both of these complementary convictions. It is with the first, "that nature is one", that we are at present concerned, though from the stand-point of Bergson's criticism these affirmations are interdependent. For it is through the realization of the inadequacy of the intellect to grasp all of reality that we are led to re-examine critically the assumption of the unity of nature. We have said that the awareness/..

awareness of conscious duration is the starting-point for this re-examination. Our conscious duration is the first or primary reality, not of course in the sense of a Cartesian "cogito" from which the existence of all that is problematic can be deduced. Our duration is not the only immediately given reality but it is primary in the sense that its nature and our mode of apprehending it supply us with the clue to the nature of all of the real and of our mode of apprehending that. For Bergson the method of our knowing is inseparable from the object of knowledge, psychology and ontology are interdependent. Duration can give us the clue first of all to our understanding of the material world. If we make the effort to enter into, to live, to feel ourselves one with our own conscious duration - to "know it" here would be ambiguous - in a word, if we make ourselves self-conscious in the highest degree, then what we are aware of is of a "duration in which the past, always moving on, is swelling unceasingly with a present that is absolutely new". This requires a considerable effort, which consists in gathering up

"our past which is slipping away, in order to thrust it, compact and undivided, into a present which we create by entering. This at least describes the ideal limit of conscious duration. Rare indeed are the moments when we are self-possessed to this extent: it is then that we are truly free. And even at these moments we do not completely possess ourselves. Our feeling of duration, I should say the actual coinciding of ourself with itself, admits of degrees."<sup>296</sup>

It is through these degrees that we can be led to understand our knowledge of the material world. For when this effort is relaxed, the unity of self-consciousness achieved by it resolves itself into discontinuous states, into separate recollections external to one another instead of the tension it possessed as an indivisible active will. We get in this way the "feeling of extension".<sup>297</sup> As these recollections, states of consciousness/..

consciousness become more discrete, interpenetrate less and less, we can understand the direction of extension. This direction Bergson describes in various ways: in terms of mind it is the direction of intelligence; in terms of matter it is the direction to spatiality. The reality of the material world, no less than the reality of consciousness, is mobility and change. There are no "things", any more than there are "states" of conscious self, and the intelligence which marks out divisions and articulations in the real is to be understood as a faculty of action rather than one of knowing.

"Our perceptions give us the plan of our eventual action on things much more than that of the things themselves. The outlines we find in objects simply mark what we can attain and modify in them."<sup>298</sup>

Thus far this is only a repetition of the main theses of Time and Free Will and Matter and Memory. Creative Evolution however sets this criticism of the intellect in its context. This is not a reduction of matter to an aspect of mind. The divisions of matter even are not wholly due to the mind. Matter "lends itself" to this treatment, just as intelligence follows its natural bent in treating it in this way. They are formed upon one another, for one another, out of a reality that is more than matter and a mind that is more than intelligence. The "reality" of matter is not denied, any more than the ability of intelligence to attain "knowledge" of a kind. But this reality and this knowledge are not to be affirmed simpliciter, out of the context of the whole experience within which they find their place. In particular, this knowledge is not to be taken as a model for all possible knowledge. The point of tracing the genesis of both matter and mind to the same "direction" or "tendency" was to show that the precision and coherence of our scientific knowledge is not due to any peculiar adequacy of the scientific/..



scientific method or intellect to represent the real in itself or as a whole. Intellect is adapted to the representation of inert matter, but if it attempts to use the same methods and concepts to represent the living, this can only be at the cost of distortion and paradox.

This has evident implications for philosophical method. Philosophy cannot simply be a kind of co-ordinating discipline which accepts facts and laws from the positive sciences, discusses their relations, adds a critique of the faculty of knowing, and even perhaps goes on to erect on this basis a cosmology or unifying metaphysics. For a particular kind of metaphysical assumption is already contained in the descriptions and analyses which are accepted from science, and a philosophy based upon such facts can do no more than formulate more precisely the assumptions already contained in the scientific attitude and method.

This, however, is hardly new. The real advance that is made in Creative Evolution over the earlier works is in the attempt to characterize this wider reality in the context of which the material world is properly understood. It was necessary to be reminded however of how "intellect" is derived by way of "inversion", "interruption", "relaxation", from that act of the mind whereby it apprehends its own conscious duration. This is the clue to our understanding of "reality", of the real unity of experience. For matter, the objective correlate of intelligence, is itself an analogous "interruption" or "inversion" of a wider reality which is life or consciousness.

The experience which is central for our understanding of this reality is again that of conscious duration. We have seen the incapacity of intelligence to comprehend life in the study of biological phenomena. But this negative criticism can only point towards the necessity for the immediate grasp in an intuition of the elusive principle which cannot be contained/..



contained in the concepts of the intelligence.

"For want of a better word we have called (this principle) consciousness. But we do not mean the narrowed consciousness that functions in each of us. Our own consciousness is the consciousness of a certain living being, placed in a certain point of space, and though it does indeed move in the same direction as its principle, it is continually drawn the opposite way, obliged, though it goes forward, to look behind. This retrospective vision is, as we have shown, the natural function of the intellect, and consequently of distinct consciousness. In order that our consciousness shall coincide with something of its principle, it must detach itself from the already-made and attach itself to the being-made."<sup>299</sup>

That is to say, this "principle" - which is variously called "consciousness", "life", "reality", even as we shall see "supra-consciousness" and perhaps "God" - has all those characteristics which make it impossible for intelligence to grasp. In particular it is becoming, mobility and change rather than being. It is creativity, bringing out of itself the radically new and unforeseeable. Bergson tries to indicate the nature of this life, and its relation to matter, in a series of images. We are asked to imagine -

"a vessel full of steam at a high pressure, and here and there in its sides a crack through which the steam is escaping in a jet. The steam thrown into the air is nearly all condensed into little drops which fall back, and this condensation and this fall represent simply the loss of something, an interruption, a deficit. But a small part of the jet of steam subsists, uncondensed, for some seconds; it is making an effort to raise the drops which are falling, it succeeds at most in retarding their fall. So, from an immense reservoir of life, jets must be gushing out unceasingly, of which each, falling back, is a world. The evolution of living species within this world represents what subsists of the primitive direction of the original jet, and of an impulsion which/..

which continues itself in a direction the inverse of materiality. But let us not carry too far this comparison. It gives us but a feeble and even deceptive image of reality, for the crack, the jet of steam, the forming of the drops, are determined necessarily, whereas the creation of a world is a free act, and the life within the material world participates in this liberty. Let us think rather of an action like that of raising the arm, then let us suppose that the arm, left to itself, falls back, and yet that there subsists in it, striving to raise it up again, something of the will that animates it. In this image of a creative action which unmakes itself we have already a more exact representation of matter. In vital activity we see, then, that which subsists of the directed movement in the inverted movement, a reality which is making itself in a reality which is unmaking itself,"<sup>300</sup>

Life, and its relation to matter, is also compared to the path cut by the last rocket of a firework display through the spent fragments of other rockets falling back to earth,<sup>301</sup> a wave which passes over or through a resistant medium of matter,<sup>302</sup> to the effort required to lift a weight,<sup>303</sup> and so on.

There are many questions which are raised by these illustrations, but for the moment we are concerned with the impetus or current of life in itself, and with the manner of our knowledge of it. One of the basic points made by all Bergson's images is that life is essentially movement and activity. We have to do not with a principle or with a reality which can be posited prior to or apart from its activity, but with creativity, change, movement itself. Life is not "a rocket which rises", "a river which flows", but the path of the rocket, the current of the river. It is true that Bergson in the illustration of the vessel full of steam quoted above speaks of an "immense reservoir of life", and that later he says that while life may be regarded as an impulsion or impetus in its contact with matter, "regarded in itself it is an immensity of potentiality",<sup>304</sup> but this can be said only by a kind of abstraction from/..

from the experience which he insists is the ground of his metaphysics.

What is clear from the whole course of the argument and from the illustrations Bergson uses is that intuition is to grasp, to enter into, sympathize with, the reality he is describing in its movement. It is only in this way that creation is to be understood.

"Everything is obscure in the idea of creation if we think of things which are created and a thing which creates, ..... there are no things, there are only actions." <sup>305</sup>

The world is to be thought or apprehended in terms of two opposite tendencies,

"the automatic and strictly determined evolution of this well-knit whole is action which is unmaking itself, and the unforeseen forms which life cuts out in it, forms capable of being themselves prolonged into unforeseen movements, represent action that is making itself."

It is this apprehension of the dual tendency of our world, extended to all reality, that enables us to speak of God, for

"if the same kind of action is going on everywhere, whether it is that which is unmaking itself or that which is striving to remake itself, I simply express this probable similitude when I speak of a centre from which worlds shoot out like rockets in a fireworks display - provided, however, that I do not present this centre as a thing, but as a certain unity of shooting out. God, thus defined, has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life action, freedom. Creation, so conceived, is not a mystery, we experience it in ourselves when we act freely." <sup>306</sup>

This idea contained in this last sentence is meant to be more than an analogy. Our own experience of free creative action is more than just "something like" what is meant by the ongoing creative activity of life itself. This life was spoken of as an impulsion or impetus, but this/..

this "is only an image. In reality, life is of the psychological order". We can only understand how life can be both one and many in psychical terms.

"Abstract unity and abstract multiplicity are determinations of space or categories of the understanding, whichever we will, spatiality and intellectuality being moulded on each other."<sup>307</sup>

But if we turn from intelligence to the intuition of conscious duration, from space to time, we can understand how life in general can be one as are our conscious selves and yet many as are our sensations, feelings, and thoughts.

Bergson has used the image of a vital impetus to enable us to grasp the essential unity of all life, and we have seen how this impetus becomes diversified into genera and species and individuals in the course of evolution. But this progress is not simply a diversification, evolution is not simply to be compared to a river which divides and subdivides into ever smaller rivulets, no one of which is more significant than another for the understanding of the course of the whole. Life has also in some sense an end, as well as a beginning. Bergson's images of divergence and his criticism of finalism show of course that this "end" is not to be understood in any naively "purposeful" sense, as the goal to which the whole tends. It is rather a vantage-point from which the whole movement can be seen and understood. The inevitable use of psychological terminology shows that this vantage-point must be that of consciousness. It is in this sense that

"consciousness, or rather supra-consciousness, is at the origin of life. Consciousness, or supra-consciousness, is the name for the rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter; consciousness again is the name for that which subsists of the rocket itself, passing through the fragments and lighting them up/..

up into organisms. But this consciousness, which is a need of creation, is made manifest to itself only where creation is possible."<sup>308</sup>

The final sentence of this quotation refers back to the evolutionary progress towards the emergence of higher species. This progress could be defined physiologically in terms of the increasing complexity of the nervous system, or behaviourally in the ever greater diversity of possible actions or reactions to a given kind of stimulus, and is now seen in psychological terms from the stand-point of human consciousness as a progress to free action. That is, consciousness is defined in terms of the power of choice of the living being,

"it is co-extensive with the fringe of possible action that surrounds the real action: consciousness is synonymous with invention and freedom."<sup>309</sup>

But though human consciousness is thus represented as being the term of an immensely long progress, it is important to note that there is none the less a radical difference between human and animal consciousness. For the capacity for learning, for combining movements, skills and so on is strictly limited even in the best-endowed of the primates, whereas in man there is no distinguishable limit to his power of invention.

"The human brain is made, like every brain, to set up motor mechanisms and to enable us to choose among them, at any instant, the one we shall put in motion by the pull of a trigger. But it differs from other brains in this, that the number of mechanisms it can set up, and consequently the choice that it gives as to which among them shall be released, is unlimited. Now, from the limited to the unlimited there is all the distance between the closed and the open. It is not a difference of degree, but of kind."<sup>310</sup>

It/..

It is of interest that Bergson here seems to rely on the idea of an infinitely enlarged intelligence to establish the reality of human freedom, rather than on any characteristically human intuition of duration. The main point, however, is that no matter how it is established, if we admit the reality of freedom then we can see how humanity can be in some sense the end of life; how man can be said indeed to continue that movement which is creativity itself. We have remarked that man is the "end" or "term" of evolution in a special sense. Bergson states specifically that the rest of nature is not "for the sake of" man, that the human is not "prefigured" in the evolutionary movement; and perhaps his point of view is best summed up in yet another of his illustrations.

"From our point of view, life appears in its entirety as an immense wave which, starting from a centre, spreads outwards, and which on almost the whole of its circumference is stopped and converted into oscillation: at one single point the obstacle has been forced, the impulsion has passed freely. It is this freedom that the human form registers. Everywhere but in man, consciousness has come to a stand; in man alone it has kept on its way. Man, then, continues the vital movement indefinitely, although he does not draw along with him all that life carries in itself. On the other lines of evolution there have travelled other tendencies which life implied, and of which, since everything interpenetrates, man has, doubtless, kept something, but of which he has kept only very little. It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, Man or Superman, had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way."<sup>311</sup>

Man continues indefinitely the movement of life because he is, or has, consciousness and freedom. Bergson seems to suggest that one aspect of this creativity is the peculiar task of philosophy and of philosophical intuition in particular. Philosophy is, or should be, the continued effort of man to "realize himself", in the reflective sense/..



sense. This would be done by man's becoming aware of, and making explicit all that is implicit in their peculiarly human experience, taking into account in particular not only that central nucleus of consciousness which is intellect, but the whole reality of mind. The study of the genesis of intellect, its setting in the context of evolution and in the context of action, has shown that it can only be understood in terms of this wider reality. It is an accident of evolution that consciousness in man is pre-eminently intellect.

"A different evolution might have led to a humanity either more intellectual still or more intuitive. In the humanity of which we are a part, intuition is, in fact, almost completely sacrificed to intellect. Intuition is there, however, but vague and above all discontinuous. It is a lamp almost extinguished, which only glimmers now and then, for a few moments at most. But it glimmers wherever a vital interest is at stake. On our personality, on our liberty, on the place we occupy in the whole of nature, on our origin and perhaps also on our destiny, it throws a light feeble and vacillating, but which none the less pierces the darkness of the night in which the intellect leaves us."<sup>312</sup>

It is the task of philosophy to seize upon these intuitions, to sustain, expand, and unite them. This demands a continually renewed effort, because not only are the most inveterate habits of our mind opposed to this way of "installing ourselves" within the movement of reality so that the intuition can only be fleeting, but also because intuition, to be communicated, has to be "translated".

"Dialectic is necessary to put intuition to the proof, necessary also in order that intuition should break itself up into concepts and so be propagated to other men; but all it does, often enough, is to develop the result of that intuition which transcends it. The truth is, the two procedures are of opposite direction: the same effort, by which ideas are connected with ideas, causes the intuition which the ideas were storing up to vanish/..

vanish. The philosopher is obliged to abandon intuition, once he has received from it the impetus, and to rely on himself to carry on the movement by pushing the concepts one after another. But he soon feels he has lost foothold; he must come into touch with intuition again; he must undo most of what he has done."<sup>313</sup>

The question of the language however, of intuition and its images, the intellect and its concepts, will be dealt with later. Our immediate concern is to make clear the ground of intuition, the kinship of mind with reality which enables this effort to be made. Bergson insists that he is not an "idealist" in the sense of reducing reality to an aspect of mind, but is clear that for him this reality can only be apprehended because it is already "in us". This is put perhaps most clearly in the later essay on Philosophical Intuition:

"The matter and life which fill the world are equally within us; the forces which work in all things we feel within ourselves; whatever may be the inner essence of what is and what is done, we are of that essence. Let us then go down into our own inner selves: the deeper the point we touch, the stronger will be the thrust which sends us back to the surface. Philosophical intuition is this contact, philosophy is this impetus."<sup>314</sup>

"Knowing", in the sense in which intelligence understands it, we saw to be knowledge for the sake of action. Freed from the prejudices of action by the effort of intuition, we will be able to see in order to see, to know for the sake of knowing. This kind of philosophy will be "an effort to dissolve again into the whole."<sup>315</sup> Bergson repeatedly holds out the promise of a philosophy which will be scientific, perfectible,<sup>316</sup> agreed by all philosophers,<sup>317</sup> since each would bring his own particular insight, his own solution of a particular problem to the building of a single philosophical edifice.<sup>318</sup> The basis of this hope or prophecy is that if the human consciousness would only turn from the attempt/..

attempt to shape the given reality according to one principle or another - which procedure inevitably leads to the divisions into "schools" of philosophy - and make the effort to enter more deeply into the understanding of its own nature, it would realise the essential relatedness of that nature to the whole reality.

This vision, as well as the difficulties of Bergson's presentation, is best summed up by quoting in extenso the extraordinary Wagnerian figure with which he closes the cosmological section of Creative Evolution.

"Thus, to the eyes of a philosophy that attempts to reabsorb intellect in intuition, many difficulties vanish or become light. But such a doctrine does not only facilitate speculation; it gives us also more power to act and to live. For, with it, we feel ourselves no longer isolated in humanity, humanity no longer seems isolated in the nature that it dominates. As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system, drawn along with it in that undivided movement of descent which is materiality itself, so all organized beings from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all places as in all times, do but evidence a single impulsion, the inverse of the movement of matter, and in itself indivisible. All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in space and in time, is one immense army galloping beside and before each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death."<sup>319</sup>

This passage is in effect the climax of Creative Evolution. In the rest of the book Bergson repeats in other terms much of what has gone before and attempts to substantiate his theories by critical reference to other philosophers.

### I.5 - The Expression of Intuition

Before going on to a critical assessment of Bergson's thought, it is necessary in a final expository section to give some consideration to the question of language, of how thought, be it intelligence or intuition, is to be expressed. Throughout his work Bergson has sought to show the fundamental incapacity of the intelligence to grasp the reality of duration and of life, and of course this means a rejection of the claims of the concepts formed and used by the intelligence to contain or represent these realities. We must therefore examine the question of how they are to be represented. If a true metaphysics must be founded on intuition, how is this intuition to be translated?

To understand the question we must recall briefly yet again the course of Bergson's criticism of the intelligence and its concepts. In Matter and Memory there was a brief discussion of the formation of general ideas.<sup>320</sup> It was shown there how this process must be understood in the light of the fundamental postulate that the mind, intelligence in particular, is oriented towards action. Similarity, generalisation, abstraction are experienced before they are thought.

"The resemblance between things or states, which we declare we see, is above all the quality common to these states or things, of obtaining from our body the same reaction, of making it sketch the same movement."<sup>321</sup>

This capacity to respond to similarity or resemblance, to act a generalisation, is one which man shares with all other animals, but it is none the less the basis on which the peculiarly human capacity to reflect upon this resemblance, to form a concept of it, is to be understood.

This tracing of the genesis of the concept to the body's automatic reaction to what "interests" it, to what is "useful" to it, rests upon Bergson's/..

Bergson's account of perception, and ultimately on his doctrine of images. From the indifferentiated manifold of pure perception, consciousness selects certain images which stand out against their background and so constitute the "objects" of the self's experience of the world. It is in response to the exigencies of action that the self constitutes the world of things; it is upon these "things", their properties, qualities, resemblances and differences that the intelligence seizes in forming its concepts; and language in its turn is the systematized expression of these ideas and shares their utilitarian character.

To say that the origin and structure of general ideas is relative to our biological needs, habits, and interests, is not of course to say that they are wholly determined by these. In a later work, the second part of the Introduction to Creative Mind, Bergson writes of "objective generalities inherent in reality itself", and makes a provisional classification of them.<sup>322</sup> But though there exist these objective generalities - such as the resemblances of genera and species in the organic world, the identities of physical forces, chemical elements, sensible qualities - upon which the vast majority of wholly artificial general ideas is modelled, this does not alter the general point of the utilitarian function of concepts and of language. Language arises in society, and its original function is

"to establish a communication with a view to co-operation. Language transmits orders or warnings. It prescribes or describes. In the first case, it is the call to immediate action: in the second, it is the description of the thing or some one of its properties, with a view to action. But in either case the function is industrial, commercial, military, always social. The things that language describes have been cut out of reality by human perception in view of human work to be done. The properties which it indicates are the calls made by/..



by the thing to a human activity. The word will therefore be the same, as I was saying, when the suggested step to be taken is the same, and our mind will attribute to various things the same property, will imagine them in the same way, will in fact group them under the same idea wherever the suggestion of the same advantage to be gained, the same action to be done, calls forth the same word."

Bergson admits that this will hardly account for all the functions of language. There has been an evolution of language from these practical beginnings. We must even allow that language also to some extent reflects intuition.

"I am quite willing to admit that this very modest share of intuition has become enlarged, that it has given birth to poetry, then to prose, and converted into instruments of art, words which, at first, were only signals: by the Greeks especially was this miracle wrought. It is no less true that thought and language, originally destined to organize the work of men in space, are intellectual in essence."<sup>323</sup>

It is upon this particular aspect of language that Bergson's criticism centres. Intelligence, as we have seen, is basically a faculty of using tools, and in language, the tools are words. Like the tools, concepts depend for their invention upon some flash of insight, but once arrived at they are fixed and definite and can be used to "stand for" the reality they symbolize. "Symbol" is the favourite word by which Bergson characterizes the concepts of intelligence, and it is perhaps important to notice that he uses it in rather a peculiar sense. The word "symbol" if it has a special meaning at all, usually is taken to indicate much more than a sign or copy of what is symbolized. It may indeed have no representational relation to its referent, the "symbolic" power being rather in the many associations, emotional, imaginative etc. which it calls to mind. In Bergson's usage "symbol" means almost the reverse of this./..



this. It is the merest counter, whose function is simply to "stand for" that which is symbolized.

Language is represented as a system of such symbols, or concepts. They have been modelled upon objects in space, and therefore are mutually distinct, external, as these objects are.

"Taken together, they constitute an 'intelligible world', that resembles the world of solids in its essential characters, but whose elements are lighter, more diaphanous, easier for the intellect to deal with than the image of concrete things: they are not, indeed, the perception itself of things, but the representation of the act by which the intellect is fixed on them. They are, therefore, not images, but symbols. Our logic is the complete set of rules that must be followed in using symbols. As these symbols are derived from the consideration of solids, as the rules for combining these symbols hardly do more than express the most general relations among solids, our logic triumphs in that science which takes the solidity of bodies for its object, that is, in geometry."<sup>324</sup>

That is to say, for Bergson the principles of logic depend ultimately on the law of identity, not only deduction, but induction also goes back to this principle. Induction implies

"that qualities, can be superposed on each other like magnitudes."<sup>325</sup>

Inevitably then, a metaphysic based upon such language and such a logic can only be a piecing together of ready-made ideas, unable to represent movement and change, hence distorting our apprehension of the real world. Time itself is represented for this kind of thought, in another of Bergson's figures, as like a series of pictures strung together so as to give the impression of a single movement, as in a cinematograph film.

Now it is precisely to this kind of application, or misapplication, of the concepts of the intelligence that Bergson's criticism is directed. He/..

He is really concerned not with the principles of logic but with their application to the real. He is not concerned to deny the usefulness, indeed the necessity of mathematical concepts, but is questioning "the assumptions underlying the application of mathematics."<sup>326</sup>

"Language itself, which has enabled it to extend its field of operation, is made to designate things, and naught but things: it is only because the word is mobile, because it flies from one thing to another, that the intellect was sure to take it, sooner or later, on the wing, while it was not settled on anything and apply it to an object which is not a thing and which, concealed till then, awaited the coming of the word to pass from darkness to light. But the word, by covering up this object, again converts it into a thing. So intelligence, even when it no longer operates upon its own object, follows habits it has contracted in that operation: it applies forms that are indeed those of unorganized matter."<sup>327</sup>

His account is obviously quite inadequate if it is taken as a straightforward account of the principles of language and logic, for language is reduced to the merest abstraction and logic to the bare apprehension of identity. Bergson himself recognizes that insight, intuition is not absent from mathematics and science itself,

"A careful study of the history of human thought would show that to it we owe the greatest accomplishments in the sciences, as well as whatever living quality there is in metaphysics. The most powerful method of investigation known to the mind, infinitesimal calculus, was born of that very reversal."

But, and this is the point which is at issue in his criticism of logic and conceptual thought,

"it (i.e. mathematics) has been able to realize these marvellous applications only through the invention of certain symbols, and that, if the intuition we have just mentioned is at the origin of the invention, it is the symbol alone which intervenes in the application/..

application. But metaphysics, which does not aim at any application, can and for the most part ought to abstain from converting intuition into symbol."<sup>328</sup>

Bergson's criticism is not of concepts themselves, however formed, nor of how we conceive of logical relations, however complex, but of the application of these to the real, the substitution of an intelligible world of concepts, composed of discrete and externally related elements, for organic wholes, for the realities given in intuition.

How are such realities "given" in intuition? Metaphysics is defined in the Introduction to Metaphysics as "the science which claims to dispense with symbols". It is the means by which we "possess", "place ourselves within", "have the intuition", "grasp", reality "over and above all expression, translation, or symbolical representation."<sup>329</sup>

This is hardly adequate as a definition. It seems to suggest first of all that philosophy is possible without the use of concepts, which Bergson denies, and further it is only a negative definition, which does nothing to make clear that intuition is an active and reflective process.

With regard to the first point, intuition must, as we saw earlier,<sup>330</sup> have recourse to concepts, the language of the understanding, "since only the understanding has a language."<sup>331</sup> But we are not to make the mistake of supposing that concepts adequately represent, express, contain the intuition. Even images, however living, however exact, cannot represent intuition, nothing can.

"To him who is not capable of giving himself the intuition of the duration constitutive of his being, nothing will ever give it, neither concepts nor images."<sup>332</sup>

Pictorial imagery however has this advantage, that its very non-representational/..

representational character - particularly if several dissimilar images are used - is better able to create that attitude of mind, that degree of attention which will enable the mind to make the immediate grasp of the real which is intuition. A single image, or a concept, substituted for this reality, may obscure what it symbolizes. It is in this sense of leading the mind, suggesting to it what is to be grasped immediately, that images can be more literal than conceptual language, for

"there are cases in which it is imagery in language which knowingly expresses the literal meaning, and abstract language which unconsciously expresses itself figuratively. The moment we reach the spiritual world, the image, if it merely seeks to suggest, can give us direct vision, while the abstract term, which is spatial in origin and which claims to express, most frequently leaves us in metaphor."<sup>333</sup>

This discussion of how intuition is to be communicated enables us to characterize more closely the method of intuition itself. We have seen that an intuition is in a real sense inexpressible, it is an immediate vision of a reality. This is what all Bergson's figures express, whether that of vision or those of feeling, sympathy, instinct or touch. But this immediate apprehension is not in any sense of the whole of reality. It is important not to confuse Bergson's method with his whole metaphysics. He claims certainly that all he has to say about evolution, the nature of matter, of life and mind, follows from basic intuitions, but those theories are not the same as the basic intuition. Still less is intuition an "idea" of the Whole. Bergson dismisses in rather scathing terms the suggestion that his method and outlook are the same as those of idealists like Schelling and Schopenhauer. Their "intuition" he says, was an immediate search for the eternal, and therefore was necessarily no more than the erection of an intellectual concept or principle into a representation of all reality.

"An/..

"An intuition, which claims to project itself with one bound into the eternal limits itself to the intellectual. For the concepts which the intelligence furnishes, the intuition simply substitutes one single concept which includes them all and which consequently is always the same, by whatever name it is called: Substance, Ego, Idea, Will. Philosophy, thus understood, necessarily pantheistic, will have no difficulty in explaining everything deductively, since it will have been given beforehand, in a principle which is the concept of concepts, all the real and all the possible."<sup>334</sup>

Bergson on the other hand does not begin with any assumption about the systematic unity of the world,

"who knows if the world is actually one? Experience alone can say, and unity, if it exists, will appear at the end of the search as a result; it is impossible to posit it at the start as a principle."<sup>335</sup>

We begin from our position as "immersed in realities". We have seen that there is one aspect of reality with which our ordinary perception, and the scientific intelligence which prolongs and refines it, is peculiarly fitted to deal. This is the reality of matter. Bergson insists that so far from being unscientific, his philosophy gives a higher place to science than any. For, in its proper field, science attains an absolute. The criticism of science amounts essentially to a rejection of the "unconscious metaphysic" contained in it, that is, a denial of the adequacy of the methods and concepts so successful in one field when they are extended to another or to the whole.

In Bergson's works this is more than the commonplace rejection of the "scientific attitude", for he claims to show, in his account of the genesis of matter, intelligence, and of concepts, just how mathematics and the "exact" sciences are applicable to matter, and in his account of/..



of duration to suggest how we have an immediate apprehension of another order of reality, which when expanded will lead to a truer and wider and not less "scientific" grasp of the real. This "expansion" of intuition is not a generalization or extrapolation from the immediately given. To think intuitively is to think in duration, but what is given by this basic intuition is only a view-point, or better, in Bergson's words, a "centre of force" which is expanded by a painstaking process of analysis of problems one by one. The task of intuition is basically to think mind, but the progress or expansion of Bergson's philosophy is in no sense to be thought of as a simple generalization from this intuition. Each new problem demands a new effort, not only of intuition, but also of analysis which will demand all the resources of the intelligence and of science.

Bergson gives an interesting account<sup>336</sup> of this dialectic of vivifying intuition and scientific analysis in his own work. He claims that not only by this method can philosophy find empirical verification, as his own notion of the ultimate reality of matter being that of movement and change rather than of stable elements has found confirmation in the later development of sub-atomic physics; but also that his work has helped to open new perspectives and suggest new hypotheses to science. He cites in particular suggestions given in Matter and Memory -

"The results thus obtained were not without their effect upon psycho-physiology and psycho-pathology themselves. To confine myself to the latter science, I shall mention simply the growing importance that considerations of psychological tension, of attention to life and all that had to do with "schizophrenia" gradually assumed in it. Even my idea of integral conservation of the past has more and more found its empirical verification in the vast collection of experiments instituted by the disciples of Freud."<sup>337</sup>

Intuition/..



Intuition then, is of an immediate reality, and as such self-authenticating. Though ultimately inexpressible in terms of anything but itself, it is none the less concrete and exact. Though it can, indeed must, to be communicated at all, be translated into concepts, these concepts do not express it, it comes nearest to expression through an intermediary image, or better images, which are situated as it were between the intuition itself and the explanatory concepts. The object of intuition is mind itself, but this "object", being in the first instance not other than the "subject", can supply a method, a way of seeing, which informs, corrects and guides the whole activity of mind in the philosophical enterprise.

This provisional summary of the meaning of "intuition" concludes the expository part of this chapter. Up to this point the attempt has been made simply to follow the course of Bergson's argument and to set out his position as clearly as possible. This has now been done so far as the leading ideas of his philosophy are concerned, with the exception of his last work, the Two Sources of Morality and Religion, with which the next chapters will be concerned. Though there was a gap of twenty-five years between the appearance of Creative Evolution in 1907 and the publication of this last book, the few essays published during this time add nothing of any significance to the conclusions of Creative Evolution. Indeed, the last essay published before Morality and Religion, that entitled the Possible and the Real,<sup>338</sup> is largely a repetition of some of the points made in Creative Evolution.

## II.1 - Recognition of Life

The critical assessment of Bergson's work will be set out as follows. The primary concern of this chapter is with Bergson's theory of knowledge. As/..

As has been pointed out, it is a major part of Bergson's thesis that the theory of knowledge cannot be separated from "theory of life". This has meant that what Bergson has to say about epistemology has mostly been presented in the context of his theory of evolution and of his metaphysics. It has been necessary to expound these theories at considerable length, but in the discussion of them the attempt will be made to deal only with those points which have implications for epistemology. The sketch of an epistemological theory thus obtained will then itself be criticised, with special reference to its setting in the whole of Bergson's thought and to its adequacy as a basis for the philosophy of religion.

We may begin then with the new field of enquiry which Bergson enters in Creative Evolution, namely, the study of biology and the theory of evolution. Bergson begins, as we saw, with a critique of the then current theories of life and of evolution, all of which he sums up as forms of "mechanism", whether of the type usually given that name or of the "finalistic" variety, which are themselves only an "inverted mechanism". The rejection of these theories, whose common principle was that "all is given" is demanded by attention to the phenomena of biology.

Bergson's critical stand-point was summed up in three inter-related points:<sup>339</sup>

- (a) An organism is an individual, that is, its unity cannot be understood as a sum of its parts.
- (b) The individual organism endures, which is to say that its unity is dynamic, preserved in change and growth.
- (c) It is creation, or creativity. This means that the future forms or functions or actions of the organism are not simply functions of/..

of its present state. Account must be taken of the new and unpredictable.

There is no need to give examples of the innumerable experiments which serve to substantiate this general view-point.<sup>340</sup> One modern theorist, von Bertalanffy, gives a convenient summary of the way in which attitudes have changed in biological research work.<sup>341</sup> He sums up the leading ideas of 19th century biology in three points which bear a striking resemblance to the position Bergson is arguing against. Biological research was formerly dominated by three ideas, the analytical-summative; the machine-theoretical and the reactive-theoretical view of organisms. These three ideas have been replaced by what von Bertalanffy calls the "organismic conception", which he affirms is now the general attitude among biologists. The organism is now to be understood in its character as an organization rather than a sum of parts; as being a dynamic system rather than a machine; and as being primarily active rather than reactive.

What is of immediate interest for the present study is not simply that Bergson's view-point, or at least his criticism of earlier views, is now accepted by at any rate a large number of biologists. For von Bertalanffy means this "organismic" conception to replace not only a mechanistic view but also any vitalistic one. By this he means that type of theory where

"the experience of our own mind is taken as a standard for living nature, and inserted into the supposed or actual gaps in our scientific knowledge."<sup>342</sup>

We are not here concerned with the philosophy of biology, but the progress of biological research and its changing attitudes sharpens a question which would in any case be of importance not only for the understanding of/..

of Bergson's metaphysics but also for his theory of knowledge. This is the question of how we are to understand the "vital impetus".

The consideration of this question will lead beyond the boundaries of biology to the centre of Bergson's thought. "Elan vital", even more than duration, is the word most associated with the philosophy of Bergson, and "vitalism" is a term commonly used to characterize his whole position.<sup>343</sup> But though the treatment of this question will affect our attitude to the whole of Bergson's thought, we shall begin, as his own method would recommend, by looking again more closely at the genesis of the image of the "vital impetus".

We saw that this principle was introduced primarily as an "organising image". In this sense it can be interpreted as no more than a lively metaphor for the evolution of all life on this planet from common forms of primitive organism. As such "vital impetus" seems unexceptionable on any view of evolution or of the nature of life. Even the most rigidly materialistic or mechanistic view has in some sense to reckon with the empirical distinction between the animate and the inanimate, and if Bergson's image is meant to sum up no more than the truism that all life is alive, along with the empirical fact or hypothesis that all forms of this life can be traced to the same kind of origin, then Bergson's term is at worst only misleading but can hardly be said to be wrong.

Misleading the term certainly is, in that it suggests itself as a name for a kind of additional "element" within organic life which is not available for any kind of scientific study or analysis. Elan vital has certainly been understood in this sense, and the question is whether or not it has to be understood in this way in order to bear the weight Bergson puts on it in the development of his philosophy.

We may note first of all that Bergson does in fact mention "vitalism" in Creative Evolution in order to reject it. What he rejects however is a vitalism of a particular kind, that which postulates a "vital principle" in each individual living organism. Bergson refers in particular to the "entelechies" of Hans Driesch,<sup>344</sup> whose work not only founded a school of "vitalist" theorists, but was, more importantly, one of the earliest scientific demonstrations of the insufficiency of pure mechanism as a model in biology.<sup>345</sup> Bergson's criticism centres on the individual character of the vital principle. For it is difficult, as we have seen, to define distinct individuality in nature. The "organized elements", indeed the cells, composing our individual organs, have themselves a certain individuality, and can therefore claim to have each its "vital principle". The facts of reproduction and development also make it difficult to isolate in a temporal sense an individual principle.

"Where then does the vital principle of the individual begin or end? Gradually we shall be carried further and further back, up to the individual's remotest ancestors: we shall find him solidary with each of them, solidary with that little mass of protoplasmic jelly which is probably at the root of the genealogical tree of life."<sup>346</sup>

If then we are to think of a vital principle at all, we must think of it in a way which makes it a "property" of life as a whole, and not of separate individuals.

"This life common to all the living undoubtedly presents many gaps and incoherences, and again it is not so mathematically one that it cannot allow each being to become individualized to a certain degree. But it forms a single whole, none the less; and we have to choose between the out-and-out negation of finality and the hypothesis which co-ordinates not only the parts/..



parts of an organism with the organism itself, but also each living being with the collective whole of all others."<sup>347</sup>

This is a curious argument, in as much as it is difficult to see why "life" ... "individualized to a certain degree" could not be called a "vital principle", but its apparent self-contradiction is to some extent resolved when it is seen that what Bergson is rejecting is "entelechies", or the idea of a kind of individual final cause immanent in living organisms. The way is still open therefore for the interpretation of his own "vital impetus" as the same kind of mysterious element within living things, except that in this case the element would be referred in explanation to its origin rather than its end or purpose.

We must go back then to those characteristics of life which were summarised earlier to see whether this interpretation is necessary for what Bergson wishes to say. It was noted that the critical aspect of Bergson's work on the philosophy of biology can now be said to be similar to the stand-point of many biologists. We are not concerned to discuss whether or not this stand-point is generally accepted or not. Nor is it within the scope or capacity of this study to discuss in what respects the great advances of recent years in bio-chemistry have altered the situation since Bergson wrote. Our present concern is with the logical features of our knowledge of living things.

The first characteristic which Bergson mentioned was that of individuality. An individual was defined as a "system separated and closed-off by Nature", though it was recognized that this notion admits of degrees, that indeed individuality is a limiting concept. Strictly speaking this idea of individuality does not seem to apply solely to living beings. Reference was made earlier to the critique of scientific "objectivity" undertaken by M. Polanyi in his book Personal Knowledge.

He/..



He there devotes a section<sup>348</sup> to the perception of order, giving examples from various fields in the physical sciences to show that even there some kind of basic perception or recognition of pattern, of unitary structure, is essential to the process of scientific discovery. The point is not simply that work in the exact sciences can involve "seeing patterns", but rather that such patterns, or the seeing of them, can be in some sense logically prior to, or at least inseparable from, the "seeing", or understanding of the elements of which the pattern is made up. This idea is of course not original in Polanyi. Philosophers of "emergence", "process", such as Lloyd Morgan, S. Alexander, and Whitehead have made familiar the extension of the concept of "organism" to inanimate systems. In this kind of view one of the characteristic features of an organism is that its parts owe their characteristic properties to the whole. Thus even the atom in modern physics becomes an "organism".

This is of course much too loose a statement on which to base any argument, and the only point of these references is to show how we can at least begin to understand Bergson's point about individuality without leaving the field of the physical sciences, much less postulating a "vital principle". But the individuality of living beings is more than simply the "pattern" that is to be discerned even in physical entities. Even if it were admitted, which the philosophers referred to above would not, that a physical "whole" such as an atom was wholly specifiable in terms of its parts, this cannot be held to be true of a living organism. The unity of such an individual is a unity of different parts or functions which can be fully described only in terms of the enduring form of the whole which the interaction of the parts subserves.

Our interest however is not in all that is contained in the conception of an "organism", but in the implications of the recognition of living/..

living organisms for the theory of knowledge. For when we pass from the knowledge of physical entities to the knowledge of living bodies a new "element" is involved. But this new element is not an unspecifiable and occult "principle" in the organism, but a new element in our knowledge of it. For it is at the level of the knowledge of living things that we are first made inescapably aware of the relation between the knower and the known, the observing consciousness and that which is observed. That is, our description of the living organism cannot be wholly in terms of the object of the description, but must take account of the relation of the observer to the observed, must refer to the act of describing. This "must" is a logical "must", in the sense that this reference to the observer is already contained, implicitly or explicitly, in the descriptions that we make.

This interpretation of Bergson's "intuition of life", the other "direction" of mind required for the understanding of what a living being is, has to be understood in the context of all Bergson says about the mind's grasp of reality. We have seen that it is a fundamental tenet of Bergson's philosophy that "reality" is immediately given to the mind. This was set out particularly in Matter and Memory in the doctrine of "images". What this means is that though we are in contact with reality even in our ordinary perception, it is a reality already structured by the mind. "Structured" does not mean "constructed", what we perceive are not phenomena in the Kantian sense, the objects of perception are not "copies" of reality but selections from it. This selection from the whole given material reality was further seen to be a function of action, that is, a selection in terms of what interests the organism, of what can serve as a fulcrum for action.

Now all this is the setting in which we can understand the double activity/..

activity of mind in perception, in knowing the world. This Bergson calls the fusion of intellect and intelligence. We may put this in another way by saying that our consciousness of the world is equally a consciousness of ourselves. This is implied in the very notions of perception and reflection. I can say nothing about the world about me without necessarily implying myself-in-the-world. Bergson points out however, and this is the point of departure for the whole of his philosophy, that this knowing or perceiving relation of the self to the world is too often understood in a spatial sense only, whereas we must recognise that knowledge and perception imply, equally with the spatial relation, the persistence in duration of myself-in-the-world. Our ordinary perception of material objects implies memory, the perceived image is made up largely of the projection of remembered images, to the point where we can say that it is this projection of mind into the flux of the real, the sensuous manifold, that constitutes "my world", or makes it the "world-for-me".

These elements of the perceived and the remembered in ordinary perception are only to be separated in analysis and not in reality. But it is by this analysis that we can see how ordinary perception is a fusion of both. Thus pure perception would be a perception in the object, immediate, instantaneous and indeed unconscious, since there would be no memory to constitute an image. Pure intelligence, free from any intuition of the self's duration, would be an apprehension of relations only, but not of any "things" between which the relations hold, since the knowledge of any "thing" necessarily implies the consciousness of a self which is not the thing, which is knowing it. These limiting notions can thus be understood as a kind of reductio ad absurdum of any ideal of perception or knowledge which would bear no relation to the perceiving mind.

But/..

But if we regard pure perception and pure intelligence as limits to which our actual perception and knowledge tend, then they, along with their objective correlates, the matter which is pure mobility and the space which is simply the schema of infinite divisibility, can be instructive as to the manner of our knowledge of reality.

There are realities we tend to know by intelligence, and there are those we tend to know more by intuition. Transposed into the terms of the present discussion this means that though all our knowledge involves self-consciousness in some sense, there is knowledge in which this is of less moment than in other knowledge. There is indeed in our knowledge of the real, a kind of scale, a continuum, from the point at which the involvement of the knowing mind, the explicit relation of the self to the known, can for all practical purposes be ignored, to that at which this relation must be made fully explicit if there is to be any understanding of the known at all.

But this is to anticipate later developments of the argument. For the moment the point is that in the physical and mathematical sciences we may effectively ignore the "knowing" in order to concentrate on the "known" and the relations of its parts.

"Physics understands its role when it pushes matter in the direction of spatiality".<sup>349</sup>

Even here we have noted that there may be an element of what Polanyi calls "personal commitment" in the recognition of order and pattern, but for our present purpose we may say that the first point at which we must become explicitly conscious of ourselves and of our relation to what is known is in the knowledge of living things, the recognition of living individuals. That the life and individuality which is known is necessarily based on our immediate knowledge of our own individual life does not/..



not make it a "reading into" the organism of anything that is not there. Our own consciousness of ourselves is simply the reference point by which we are able to recognise what we see.

This is true even when we acknowledge that "seeing" is hardly the right word. The recognition of living individuals involves feeling, or, in Bergson's words, a kind of sympathy. Professor MacMurray sums the matter up thus :

"Our immediate knowledge of life is different in type from our immediate knowledge of matter. Perhaps it would be truer to say that it is on a higher level; because, while it involves all the avenues of consciousness which yield us an apprehension of the world as material, it calls into play also new aspects and capacities of consciousness which matter fails to awaken. We can be conscious of matter without being conscious of the life of our own bodies."<sup>350</sup>

The references to earlier discussion were necessary to set the present interpretation of Bergson's "vital impetus" in the context of his whole theory of knowledge from its basis in perception, but the two remaining aspects of life which the notion of "impetus" is meant to cover may be dealt with more quickly.

A living being not only is an individual but it endures and it creates. This is to say it can only be understood as a process of growth and development. Growth does not mean simply increase in size. Essentially it is a process of change. Even materially an organism is not "the same" from moment to moment of its life. Its "past", whether this is thought of physiologically in terms of metabolism, or behaviourally in terms of learning and habit formation, is taken up into its "present". Its behaviour therefore can only be understood in these terms, not as a series of discrete events, but as "acts which constitute a history".

As/..

As in the case of individuality, Bergson admitted that growth or duration is the characteristic tendency rather than a property of life. That is, though clearly marked in, say, the vertebrates, it is scarcely discernible in the amoeba, which hardly "endures" at all. The whole argument of Time and Free Will was designed to show that our apprehension of any kind of change or movement is dependent on our intuition of duration. While we may in the physical world for the most part represent this movement as immobility, time as space, without serious error, when we come to the consideration of life we can only understand the phenomena scientifically by taking explicit account of this intuition which is the manner of our knowing the living being.

An organism not only grows but it develops. This means not only that we must recognize material change within a persisting form, but also changes which produce new features in the form itself. These changes, Bergson says, whether of an individual or within a species, are radically new and unforeseeable.

It may appear that at this point Bergson does overstep the limits of the non-vitalist interpretation we have been giving to what he says. It is true that his language often suggests that he means that developmental changes in living organisms are not amenable to any kind of scientific analysis. Passages describing the "spontaneity" of the vital impetus, life's "struggle" with matter, its "hesitation" over which way to develop do suggest a mysterious kind of entity within or behind the material composition of the organism. There would be little point however in undertaking a systematic analysis of all Bergson's language on this point. His usage is ambiguous, here as so often, due to his fondness for exposition by stark contrasts and his separation in analysis of what cannot be separated in fact. It is unlikely however that Bergson could take such a radical/..



radical view of development as the one suggested, and what is immediately important for the present purpose is that the facts he points to do not require such an interpretation.

The understanding of development implies certainly a "teleological" viewpoint, but this does not mean that this view-point is necessarily "unscientific". It does not mean for instance that geneticists working on the chemistry of the cell nucleus must take account of the action of a "telos" in addition to the specification of the nucleus in terms of D.N.A. and R.N.A. and protein. There is no limit to bio-chemical analysis, but there is a context; that, as we have seen, of the individual living organism.

When the facts of development in particular are examined, this context must be recognized to include a temporal aspect. The organism is only fully understood in terms of what it develops into. Chemical analysis is certainly in order within this spatio-temporal context set by the organism. We may certainly attempt to isolate which genetic material causes which effect, but the logical point Bergson is making in his reference to creativity is that this analysis can only be done when we treat causes and effects as given, when we abstract from the living, enduring, developing organism. We cannot begin with the abstraction, it is possible only on the basis of a prior, logically prior, recognition of the living individual. This recognition has teleological elements certainly, but "teleological" here does not necessarily imply any vital principle, or any plan or purpose inherent in living things.

"Elan vital" then, considered as an organizing image for explanation, or at least better understanding, of organic evolution, does not need to be interpreted in any "vitalist" sense. Negatively, it stands for the criticism of views which would reduce life to a mere mechanism; positively it/..

it indicates that the real nature of living organisms is to be understood only on the basis of an intuition rooted in the intuition we have of our own conscious duration.

Bergson's later development of the notion of vital impetus counts against any "vitalist" interpretation. For life is "consciousness itself" and this consciousness extended becomes matter. However this rather obscure statement is understood, it does at least seem to exclude the idea that life is to be understood as "something" within matter.

## II.2 - The Knower and the Known

This mention of the later development of the notion of vital impetus, and of the relation between consciousness and matter raises further questions. It may be objected that the kind of interpretation given above to "life", or "élan vital", does not accord with the way in which these notions are developed in the metaphysical or cosmological sections of Creative Evolution. As was noted, Bergson himself says that the vital impulse is "only an image", but he goes on to say that it is really "of the psychological order".<sup>351</sup> "Consciousness, or supra-consciousness, is at the origin of life". But not only is this consciousness at the origin of life, it is also in some sense the origin of all that is. We have seen, in the discussion of the notion of "tension" as expounded in Matter and Memory,<sup>352</sup> that it is by no means easy to interpret in objective or ontological terms what Bergson means by the possibility of matter "becoming" mind, or vice versa. The same problem is met with in the metaphysics of Creative Evolution. There are many passages of the later book which adopt the "frankly dualist" viewpoint of Matter and Memory. Life is "confronted with matter",<sup>353</sup> which by its inertia forces life to evolve in the ways which have produced all the orders, genera, and species of life. Not only is matter thus an obstacle to life, but it also has a more/..

more positive function. Matter is what brings division and precision to life.<sup>354</sup> It is also matter which provokes the effort of life which has resulted in the development of higher species, the evolution towards consciousness and freedom.<sup>355</sup>

Prima facie this would seem to indicate that life and matter are two wholly opposite forces or tendencies which can have no common origin. It is true that as tendencies they are opposed, but we have also seen in the image of supra-consciousness, or God, that matter and life are opposite tendencies of the same "substance". If life is freedom, action, creation, matter is this creativity "unmaking itself".

"Consciousness or supra-consciousness is the name for this rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter."<sup>356</sup>

In the formula of Vladimir Jankélévitch,

"Bergsonism appears to us as a monism of substance, and a dualism of tendency."<sup>357</sup>

This formula seems to be an accurate enough summary of what Bergson says, but the summary statement does not make it any clearer how we are to understand him - particularly when it is realised that for Bergson substance is to be defined in terms of movement or tendency.<sup>358</sup> Here again, however, what is very obscure when stated in terms of ontology becomes more clear when restated in terms of epistemology.

For it is important to realise that the "supra-consciousness", in which - or in whom - both matter and life have their origin, is at the extreme limit of that tendency of reality which has been called life. Bergson speaks of the aim of philosophy being that of seizing upon and expanding our intuition of life, of grasping it, no longer from outside, but from within.<sup>359</sup> At its limit, this would be a kind of re-absorption of the human consciousness in its principle, in life or consciousness itself/..

itself.<sup>360</sup> But this is the description of a limiting case, of that which is as much outside possible human experience as is "pure perception".

Henri Gouhier, in his discussion of the "cosmic God" of Creative Evolution,<sup>361</sup> points out the genesis of this idea of God in Bergson's earlier works. In Matter and Memory, consciousness was shown to have a certain degree of tension, or rhythm of duration. This rhythm is not the same for all beings. We can imagine different kinds of consciousness which might have degrees of tension other than our own, in particular -

"would not the whole of history be contained in a very short time for a consciousness at a higher degree of tension than our own, which would watch the development of humanity while contracting it, so to speak, into the great phases of its evolution."

This is the first glimpse of a scale of being which would have at its limit a consciousness which, while still enduring, would in its perception condense great periods of existence into an intenser life. The same conception is found in the Introduction to Metaphysics, where its character as a limiting concept is put more clearly.

"The intuition of our duration, far from leaving us suspended in the void as pure analysis would do, puts us in contact with a whole continuity of durations which we should try to follow either downwards or upwards: in both cases we can dilate ourselves indefinitely by a more and more vigorous effort, in both cases transcendent ourselves. In the first case, we advance towards a duration more and more scattered, whose palpitations, more rapid than ours, dividing our simple sensation, dilute its quality into quantity: at the limit would be the pure homogeneous, the pure repetition by which we shall define materiality. In advancing in the other direction, we go toward a duration which stretches, tightens, and becomes more and more intensified: at the limit would be eternity. This time not only conceptual eternity, which is an eternity of death, but an eternity of life. It would be a living and consequently still moving eternity where our own duration would find itself/..



itself like the vibrations in light, and which would be the concretion of all duration as materiality is its dispersion.

Between these two extreme limits moves intuition, and this movement is metaphysics itself."<sup>362</sup>

It is evident in this passage that the description of consciousness at a higher tension than that of any human consciousness has more significance for methodology than for ontology, and it is in this sense that we propose that the supra-consciousness of Creative Evolution should first be understood. In this case the point of departure is no longer the intuition of duration understood as a kind of perception, but of that intuition in its full sense as the consciousness of life, of action, of freedom. Creation, Bergson says, is not a mystery;

"we experience it in ourselves when we act freely."<sup>363</sup>

By the same effort of intuition by which we were able to pass from the awareness of the tension of our own duration to the conception of a higher degree of tension which at its limit would be "eternity", we can pass from the intuition of our own existence in duration as essentially creative to the conception of God, or supra-consciousness.

Gouhier regards this passage from the consciousness or eternity sketched in Matter and Memory and the Introduction to Metaphysics to the "God" of Creative Evolution as a passage from a "limiting case" to the affirmation of an existence.<sup>364</sup> In the earlier works "consciousness at a higher degree of tension", "eternity of life", are indications of what God would be like if he existed, whereas the creator God of Creative Evolution is a real being, or perhaps "Being itself". There is no need at this point to examine the question here. Our present concern is with the theory of knowledge implied by or given with Bergson's metaphysics, and for this purpose there is no need to settle the question of whether God/..

God is here affirmed as existent or not. His existence is certainly not demonstrated, we have rather been shown, by analogy with our own experience of creation, how the idea of God's creating is possible.

Further questions about the nature of God may also be left for discussion later in the context of Bergson's whole account of religion, including the celebrated discussion on Bergson's "monism", which was begun by J. de Tonquédec's article on the definition of God in Creative Evolution.<sup>365</sup> The point of immediate interest for the present enquiry is to note that Bergson approaches the idea of God from the side of human experience, in particular the experience of creation. That is, in Gouhier's words

"in traditional metaphysics, we may say in general terms that God's existence is known before he is known as creator. There is a demonstration, under the name of God, of the necessary existence of Prime Mover, as in Aristotle and St. Thomas, or of an infinite Being, as in Descartes and Spinoza. Only afterwards is the question raised of God's relation to the world; whether this relation is that of Creator to creature. The two questions are so distinct that the first can be posed without the second, and the same response to the first does not imply the same response to the second."

In Bergson on the other hand, the idea of God as creator, as free, as "supra-conscious" is

"only an introduction to theodicy, what the philosopher can say before touching on the difficult questions of the divine transcendence and personality: these are the elementary attributes without which the word 'God' cannot be used at all."<sup>366</sup>

If then we leave the ontological discussion as a whole until those "difficult questions" have been explicitly raised, what can be said immediately about epistemology? To some extent of course, the incompleteness of the ontology implies an incompleteness in the theory of knowledge/..



knowledge. We cannot really understand the possibility of knowing God until more has been said about God and his relation to the world and mankind. It is possible however to understand the general shape of Bergson's account of knowledge and to see at what points it still needs to be elaborated and amended in order to provide a basis for the philosophy of religion.

In the discussion of the meaning of the vital impetus, it was suggested that this is to be understood in epistemological terms as the "involvement" of the knower in the known. "Knowing" a living being, that is, is only possible on the basis of a kind of "sympathy" which is not a projection of self-consciousness into the object but a recognition in the object of something that is an immediately given element of our own self-consciousness. It was further seen that this element of self-consciousness, or involvement of the knower could be thought of as progressively implied in all knowledge. At the level of say, pure mathematics, it is minimal, at the level of the perception of material bodies it is still of little practical importance and may be ignored for most purposes; but it is at the level of the understanding of change and movement, the recognition of life, and the understanding of self, that wholly "objective" language modelled on physics and mathematics first becomes seriously misleading. In Bergson's terms, the limiting case of pure spatiality shows us the direction of intelligence; consideration of change, of life, of the duration of the self shows us the direction of intuition.

The image of supra-consciousness is the "limiting case" which now further clarifies this direction of intuition. If intuition is enlarged, deepened, purified, we can envisage a point at which it would be absorbed in its object, the "identification" of the knower with the known would be/..

be increased to the point at which the knower would be one with the known. The "oneness" is not complete identity, but rather refers to that enlargement of sympathy, that increase in immediacy which would enable us not simply to know, even intuitively, the current of consciousness of which our own is as it were a rivulet, but to live it. The subject-object relation as we know it in ordinary experience would at this point be broken down, or better transformed into something much wider. "Knowing" would no longer be simply an intellectual relation, modelled, as it usually is, on the act of seeing, but would include the whole self-consciousness of the knower.

"In order that our consciousness shall coincide with something of its principle, it must detach itself from the already-made and attach itself to the being-made. It needs that, turning back on itself and twisting on itself, the faculty of seeing should be made to be one with the act of willing."<sup>367</sup>

All this is very obscure. The idea contained in the last quotation is only hinted at and in no way worked out in Creative Evolution. We may note in passing that the notion of the coincidence of consciousness with its principle needs working out not only in terms of the elaboration of what is meant by this "principle", and by supra-consciousness, but also that the inadequacy of Bergson's definition of human consciousness or personality is here clearly seen.

A number of points have been made towards this definition; the freedom of Time and Free Will, the body/mind relation of Matter and Memory, the creative life of Creative Evolution, but those strands have not yet been woven into anything like a coherent account of "persons". This would not matter greatly for a theory of knowledge of the traditional type, but if Bergson's theory of knowledge postulates, even as a limiting case, a complete personal involvement in "knowing", then it is obvious that/..

that a fuller account of personality is required.

This criticism may seem hardly justified at this point, since we have not yet given any consideration to the later work of Bergson in which he deals explicitly for the first time with personality, and ethics, but it is felt not only that the general principles of Bergson's epistemology can be understood before their completion in the two sources of Morality and Religion, but also that they should be understood in this way, in order the better to see how the theory - and its lacunae, have influenced the account of ethics and religion.

A hint was given earlier of the idea that Bergson's theory of knowledge is to be understood as suggesting a kind of scale or continuum of knowledge between the ideal limits of pure intelligence and pure intuition. The notion of a scale is suggested by V. Jankélévitch, though he states this only in ontological terms.

"From consciousness to matter there is at bottom only a single scale of realities less and less dense; but this scale can be taken as moving in one direction or as in the other contrary direction."<sup>368</sup>

This ontological statement has peculiar difficulties - which are not lessened when Jankélévitch goes on to say that "matter, in the end, is nothing", but it is perhaps more comprehensible as an account of knowing. Our ordinary knowledge moves on a scale between the two ideal limits which have been described, knowledge by pure intelligence, and knowledge by pure intuition.

It is important to notice that knowledge or consciousness is a fusion of these two elements however. Bergson can easily be misunderstood as saying that there are as it were two elements in the furniture of the world - matter and mind - and that the human consciousness is equipped/..

equipped with two corresponding "faculties", intelligence and intuition, each of which is enabled to grasp one of the basic elements of reality. Bergson's method of exposition lends itself to this misinterpretation, and some of his phraseology explicitly suggests it; philosophy must begin by "tracing a line of demarcation between the inert and the living",<sup>369</sup> intelligence is "characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life",<sup>370</sup> and there is reference to two "halves" of reality,<sup>371</sup> as to the "halves" of our knowledge.<sup>372</sup> Bergson is equally insistent however, that his analysis separates that which can only be separated by analysis - memory and perception, intelligence and intuition. These are separated by showing their "direction", only so that we can better understand perception and mind as a fusion of them.

It is this unity of the perceiving and knowing mind, "a rich full unity, the unity of a continuity, the unity of our reality",<sup>373</sup> which is implied by, and is the basis of the unity of matter and of life which was traced to its origin in supra-consciousness. The two phrases from Jankélévitch quoted earlier to sum up Bergson's metaphysics may be transposed into terms of epistemology as a summary of his theory of knowledge. Bergson's ontology was characterized as a "monism of substance, and a dualism of tendency". This we may translate as meaning that within the given, immediate unity of apperception Bergson distinguished two "directions" of mind. These directions are not "faculties" but rather different attitudes of mind, adopted not arbitrarily but "moulded on the real", that is, adopted in accordance with the characteristics of reality perceived and known. Knowledge of that which "endures" involves an implicit reference to the conscious duration of the knower, while knowledge of that which does not "endure" need contain no such reference.

Any suggestion in this that we are speaking of separate realities and/..

and separate faculties may be corrected by reference to the other image of Jankélévitch, of a scale of reality from consciousness to matter. This is taken to indicate a single scale of knowledge between the points at which reference to, or involvement of, the "knower" is at its maximum to that at which it is minimal. It has to be remembered of course that the very word "knower", or "subject", is misleading. The ordinary meaning of the word "knowledge" itself is so shaped by a certain idea of objectivity, so formed by intelligence, in Bergson's terminology, as to be really only appropriate for one end of the scale.

In the same way then as it was seen that the quasi-physical notion of tension in Matter and Memory was best understood in psychological terms, it is now suggested that Bergson's ontology is primarily valuable for its implied theory of knowledge. Further clarification of this interpretation is necessary, but this will perhaps best be done in a wider context.

### II.3 - Groundwork of a Theory of Knowledge

The argument of the first three chapters has been necessarily diffuse, since Bergson's own order has been followed. We may now however try to set out in summary form and to clarify those insights which appear to constitute Bergson's most valuable contributions to the philosophy of mind and knowledge. This will serve both as a resumé of what has gone before and as a basis for the examination of morality and religion in the next chapters, and will show what kind of epistemology is found to be implicit in Bergson's metaphysics.

(a) The basis of Bergson's philosophy is his return to immediate experience, and in particular to this immediate experience as temporal. It was the apprehension of the reality of conscious duration which first led/..



led to the criticism of intelligence and conceptual thinking. For when it is realized that the concept of time as a homogeneous medium, with its quantitative numerical relations, cannot represent without distortion the reality of experienced duration, then we are led to explore the character of this duration and our awareness of it. This is the genesis of Bergson's philosophical method, which he himself says is more important than his doctrines.<sup>374</sup> When it is discovered that our language and logic do not express the nature of the real and its internal relations, as these are given in immediate experience, then the task of philosophy becomes that of going behind the forms of language and concepts to the given reality, to make explicit what is implicit in immediate experience prior to its formulation in statement and concept.

(b) But immediate experience cannot be characterized solely in terms of the duration of the self. What we are aware of in immediate experience is the self-in-the-world. This does not mean awareness of the self over against the independent self-sufficient world of science or realism. At the level of immediacy there is a given unity of world and mind. The "world" is not independent of mind since the system of "images" which comprises my world is modified or completely altered by the simplest movement of the central image of my body. There is no need to repeat here the exposition of how "idealism" and "realism" derive their opposed doctrines from the same given experience,<sup>375</sup> or to repeat in detail Bergson's proposals for resolving the dispute. What is important is that this discussion clarifies the practical reference of perception and hence of our ordinary knowledge. That is, we are to realize that the world as we know it in our ordinary thinking and in the science which prolongs and makes precise that thinking, is an abstraction from the world as it is immediately given. The self-in-the-world is an active/..



active enduring self, which by the projection of remembered images no less than by the perception of presented ones constitutes its world in the interest of its own action upon it. What our concepts and our science describe is not the world as it is in itself - but the world as it is to be acted upon. The structure of our language and logic assumes this active interest; a description of the world in terms of it is not simply a picture of the world, but the plan of our action upon it.

Now this substitution of an inter-related system of symbols, in Bergson's sense of that word, for the reality of the world as given in immediate experience is not in itself an error. This is the only way in which we can think the reality of the material world, but serious errors arise when this habit of mind which is moulded upon matter is used as a model for the whole of reality. All of Bergson's polemic against the composition of mobility with immobilities, of real duration with the "points" of spatialized time, his rejection of any mechanical conception of living organisms or of the universe as a whole, are a rejection of this habit of mind which seeks to fabricate the real with ready-made elements which are themselves only abstractions from the flux of the whole.

(c) It was noted in the previous chapter that there was a parallel between the work of Bergson and that of Professor MacMurray, particularly with regard to what MacMurray calls the "stand-point of action".<sup>376</sup> This parallel is particularly striking in the case of the kind of point just outlined. MacMurray - in his earlier work Interpreting the Universe in particular - begins from the same kind of notion of the immediate as Bergson, and gives an account of language and conceptual thinking in terms of abstraction from this immediate given unity in the same way as Bergson does.<sup>377</sup> For him also "in immediate experience the whole as well as the self/..

self is one - an unbroken unity and continuity of being". This unity, at the level of immediacy, includes the self.

"It is only when we reflect that the consciousness of being set over against the world, of standing apart from it in isolation, makes its appearance."<sup>378</sup>

This activity of reflection - that is, in Bergson's terms, our ordinary thought, which is largely intelligence, results in the abstraction from, and substitution for, the real world, of a system of symbols.

"Descriptive analysis atomizes a reality which is given as a whole. The unity of the whole has, therefore to be represented by arranging the isolated symbols in a relational system. This system of relations is not determined, at least directly, by the nature of the world as we experience it. It is itself a substitute, and in certain respects an inadequate substitute, for the given unity and completeness of immediate experience."<sup>379</sup>

The point of the comparison here, however, is not simply to demonstrate the similarity of MacMurray's analysis to that of Bergson's, but to use his discussion to bring out what seems to be a confusion in Bergson's thought.

We have seen that both begin from an immediate experience of the self-in-the-world which transcends the "self over against the world", or subject-object relation which characterizes our ordinary thought. Both affirm that the objective side of this relation is to be understood as a function of the action of the self in the world.

What MacMurray says more clearly than Bergson however, is that the other half of this relation, the self-as-subject, is also equally an abstraction from the whole of immediate experience. This is certainly implied in Bergson's criticism of subjective idealism. If the system of images referred to the central image of my body, i.e. my perceptual world/..

world, is taken as primary, then there must remain an unbridged gap between this system and that other system of images referred to one another which constitutes the "world" of science. The relation between the subject and the "order of nature" becomes a mystery.<sup>380</sup> Bergson insists as strongly as MacMurray that the self is a "centre of action" - in MacMurray's terms, "The self exists only as agent."<sup>381</sup>

But it is in the later development of the theory of knowledge that there appears to be a confusion in Bergson. For though he insists that it is characteristic of human experience that we are centres of action, in the world precisely in virtue of our action upon it, he yet suggests that in intuition we can escape from the "exigencies of action".<sup>382</sup> This reversal of the habitual tendency of thought is an effort which, it is suggested in one place, will even take us beyond, or rather behind, properly human experience.<sup>383</sup>

The difference here between Bergson and MacMurray is however perhaps more apparent than real. In general, Bergson restricts the notion of "action" to biological function. "Action", in the sense in which it gives rise to the "prejudices of action" is a function of the needs of the organism. In this sense both man and other animals are "active", as is evidenced by Bergson's tracing the genesis of intelligence in man to the same exigencies of action which have given rise to the development of instinct in animals. It is in this sense that action gives rise to "prejudices", which consist essentially in the projection as a representation of the real of the system of symbols which serve the needs of action. When this system of symbols is substituted in reflection for the real, there arises the need to return behind it, and in intuition to grasp once more the immediate experience from which these symbols are abstracted.

But/..

But there is another use of the word. There is the characteristically free act of the enduring self in Time and Free Will, the creative act of consciousness and supra-consciousness in Creative Evolution. In this sense we cannot escape from the "exigencies of action", for we exist as living enduring creative beings. This is the sense which will be developed in the Two Sources of Morality and Religion. The two senses of the word may be illustrated from Creative Evolution. We have quoted<sup>384</sup> the passage where Bergson speaks of the effort of intuition aiming at making the faculty of seeing one with the faculty of willing. It was noted that this conception is hardly more than hinted at in Creative Evolution, but even there it is obvious that what is meant is that the coincidence of intuition with its principle, or with supra-consciousness, is very far from being an escape from "action". The relation is no longer one of "knowing" or "seeing", in the sense that the subject is over against the object, but on the contrary is absorbed in it in such a fashion that not only his intellect but his will, his active being, is one with it. There is an apparent contrast between this and a later passage where, as opposed to the habit of the intellect, whose function is "to preside over actions", the method of intuition is said to be an effort "to see in order to see, and no longer to see in order to act."<sup>385</sup> The context however makes it clear that what we are to free ourselves from in "seeing to see" is not the necessity of action in the widest sense. The self is to be defined as enduring, creative, i.e. as active, and intuition is precisely the immediate "entering into", installing of ourselves in, the reality of the duration of the real, of creative evolution. "Seeing to see" is contrasted with that mediate kind of knowledge which is the substitution of symbol for reality.

(d) This means that we can say that all knowledge has a practical reference/..



reference in the sense that it is to be referred to the immediately given experienced in the self in the world. Within immediate experience the dualism of mind and matter is overcome,

This unity of the world and mind in immediate experience is the basis of Bergson's theory of knowledge. Its significance may perhaps be made more clear by reference to other philosophers who begin from the same kind of stand-point. Reference has already been made to the philosophy of Professor MacMurray, who explicitly derives his theory of knowledge in the same way from the unity of the immediately given.<sup>386</sup> Much has also been written on the debt owed to Bergson by existentialists and phenomenologists.<sup>387</sup> J. Alexander, in his short but illuminating study of Bergson, expounds his ideas largely in terms borrowed from these later thinkers. On this particular point he writes -

"Existence, Bergson shows, manifests an initial and irresistible compresence of the self and the world in and through the body experienced subjectively. This new role given to the body is a prime source of the speculations of Marcel, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, not to mention Heidegger, on the 'body-subject'. It enables Bergson to anticipate the phenomenological and existential concept of being-in-the-world and its corollaries: the distinction between brute and human existence and the identification of existence and time."<sup>388</sup>

More helpful for the present discussion however is a comparison with a thinker who appears to owe no explicit debt to Bergson. The notion of the concept of "persons" as a "primitive concept" set out in the third chapter of P.F. Strawson's Individuals is in many respects similar to Bergson's standpoint. The concept of a person is "primitive" in that it logically precedes the idea of mind or of body. It would be better perhaps in comparing Bergson to Strawson to speak not of the "concept" of a person but of that "experience" of the self as a person which/..



which underlies the formation of the concept.

Strawson's proposal is that we recognise the concept of a person as a basic component of our conceptual scheme of things. It is "basic" in the sense that it is "not to be analysed as that of an animated body or of an embodied anima". But the attributes or characteristics of both body and mind are predicable of a person. The concept is

"to be understood as the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation etc. are equally applicable to an individual entity of that type."

This concept is only possible on the basis of a recognition of a plurality of persons.

"There would be no question of ascribing one's own states of consciousness or experiences to anything, unless one also ascribed, or were ready and able to ascribe, states of consciousness, or experiences, to other individual entities of the same logical type as that to which one ascribes one's own states of consciousness. The condition of reckoning oneself as a subject of such predicates is that one should also reckon others as subjects of such predicates."<sup>389</sup>

Now it is true that Strawson does not say that the concept of a person is the only basic element in our conceptual scheme. The first chapter of his book is devoted to showing that a primary place among particulars must be accorded to the category of material bodies. This would seem to count against any idea of a parallel between Strawson's concept of a person and Bergson's idea of what is given in immediate experience, since for Bergson, the concept of a material body, however realistically interpreted, is not primary or basic in anything like the same sense as the immediate intuition of the self's own duration. The difference between Strawson and Bergson is more apparent than real, but it/..

it does serve to point to the basic similarity of their point of departure. For Strawson is concerned in dealing with material bodies and persons to point out categories of particulars which must be given a central place in our scheme of things. But these concepts or categories must themselves be abstractions from a certain basic immediate experience, that which Bergson has characterized as the duration of the self-in-the-world. That this is true even of the concept of a "person", Strawson seems to recognize, when in answer to the question of what it is in the natural facts that makes this concept intelligible given its "primitive" character, he assigns a central place to a certain class of predicates applied to persons

"which involve doing something, which clearly imply intention or a state of mind or at least consciousness in general, and which indicate a characteristic pattern, or range of patterns, of bodily movement, while not indicating at all precisely any very definite sensation or experience. I mean such things as 'going for a walk', 'coiling a rope', 'playing ball', 'writing a letter'. Such predicates have the interesting characteristic of many P-predicates (i.e. those predicates uniquely assignable to persons), that one does not, in general, ascribe them to oneself on the strength of observation, whereas one does ascribe them to others on the strength of observation."

In such cases, we feel no reluctance to concede that what is ascribed is the same thing in the case of others as it is in oneself. This is because we understand or interpret the movements of other bodies in these cases

"only by seeing them as elements in just such plans or schemes of action as those of which we know the present course and future developments without observation of the relevant present movements. But this is to say that we see such movements as actions, that we interpret them in terms of intention, that we see them as movements of individuals of a type to which also belongs that individual/..

individual whose present and future movements we know about without observation; it is to say that we see others as self-ascribers, not on the basis of observation, of what we ascribe to them on this basis."<sup>390</sup>

But this is surely to say that the category of persons as basic particulars, or the concept of a person as a basic element of language, is an abstraction from the primary self-in-the-world. It must be recognised of course that Bergson's account of this immediate experience must be enlarged to include what he virtually ignores, which is the immediate pre-conceptual recognition of other persons. This is of course an element in Bergson's account of immediacy; life, consciousness, individuality, is recognized and not projected, but he is not as explicit as is Strawson on recognizing this as an essential element in the self's intuition of its own duration or consciousness.

It might be argued that this is to give an unduly nominalistic kind of account of Strawson's concept of a person. It could be said that he is describing not an abstraction from experience, but either the basic form of all experience or else the primary content of experience, than which nothing is more "basic" from which it could be abstracted. This might very well be conceded, but only on condition that it is recognized that in this case the category of material bodies is not "primary" in the sense that the category of persons is. Strawson does indeed say that the category of persons is in "a different though related way basic."<sup>391</sup> It appears however that the difference is that on this second interpretation of the concept of persons the category of material bodies is no longer basic at all, but derivative from the form, or content of our experience as persons. Material bodies are said to be "basic" only in terms of particular-identification within our conceptual scheme as it is. But "our conceptual scheme as it is" not only includes the categories of material/..

material bodies and of persons, but is also itself a function of all that Strawson has described as being implied in the concept of a person, namely that we and others should be reckoned to be the subjects of predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics. That is, the concept of a person itself assumes, in its corporeal aspect, the placing of material bodies within a unified spatio-temporal framework, so that the category of material bodies would seem to be logically secondary and derivative in the way that Strawson considers the concept of the pure individual consciousness to be.<sup>392</sup>

This absolute primacy of the concept of persons would seem to be indicated by Strawson himself when he discusses the objection that

"however elaborate a description we produce of a network of spatially and temporally related things and incidents, we can never be sure of producing an individuating description of a single particular item, for we can never rule out the possibility of another exactly similar network."

But this objection can have no foundations, since it overlooks -

"the fact that we, the speakers, the users of the dating and placing systems, have our own place in that system and know that place; that we ourselves, therefore, and our own immediate environment provide a point of reference which individuates the network and hence helps to individuate the particulars located in the network."<sup>393</sup>

Thus material bodies serve as individuating particulars within a framework which is itself individuated by the "presence" within it of persons, whether this "presence" is considered as a basic concept in our conceptual scheme or as the immediate datum of experience prior to any kind of conceptual formulation.

Perhaps/..

Perhaps the real difference between Bergson and Strawson at this point is in their conception of what logic is. Bergson, as we have seen, conceives logic and conceptual thinking as a whole on the model of mathematics, concepts are fixed "symbols". Anything as flexible and non-mathematical as Strawson's "concept of a person" he might call an "image". Strawson on the other hand, does not regard "logic" as being all of one type. It is a major contention of his earlier work, Introduction to Logical Theory, that though a formal or symbolic logic can be constructed which may be useful in many respects, such a logic cannot account for all the complexities of the logic of ordinary language.

The point of all these comparisons however is not to draw any forced parallels between Bergson and a later kind of philosophy, but is rather to illustrate by examples how Bergson is being understood in this thesis with regard to his method and his point of departure. The comparison with Strawson is also designed to show how, though Bergson's language and manner of exposition are far from being those of contemporary English language philosophy, yet both his general conception of what his enterprise is, and his point of departure for it, can be restated in terms not unlike those of contemporary philosophy.

Strawson says his book is an essay in "descriptive metaphysics." In terms of contemporary philosophy in English he can be said to move from the analysis of pieces of language to the question of the necessary conditions of language,<sup>394</sup> to the attempt to lay bare the most basic elements of our thought. But though "basic" here means primary only in the sense of particular-identification, i.e. primary within a given conceptual scheme, the question of ontology cannot be avoided, unless indeed a kind of solipsistic consciousness with its own conceptual scheme is thought of as a real possibility. But this is not for Strawson a genuine/..



genuine issue at all, the pure ego or individual consciousness is derivative from the concept of a person which is by definition part of the world.<sup>395</sup> Thus ontology is implicit in this kind of enquiry, just as we have seen that ontology and epistemology are inextricably bound together in Bergson's thought. This indeed is a basic principle of Bergson's philosophy. The meaning of his return to immediacy is the attempt to grasp what is basic to all experience, and from this point to understand how our conceptual scheme, our knowledge, is built up or engendered. It is not only in method however that Bergson has been compared to Strawson, for it has been contended that Strawson's concept of "persons" is not only absolutely basic to his enquiry but also that it bears a strong resemblance to Bergson's immediate intuition of the conscious acting creative self.

(e) Given then this understanding of immediate experience, how are we from this stand-point to understand knowledge? We have seen that the material world as a self-subsisting entity is an abstraction from immediate experience, and our scientific language and concepts are a projection in symbolic form of this abstraction. Though the symbolism of mathematical thought may be adequate for our ordinary purposes to reality in so far as it is material, we have seen that it is inadequate for the representation of life. This does not mean of course that mathematical thought has no place in biology or psychology. Bergson seems to realise how some of his writings have lent themselves to a too radical distinction between matter and life, and in the collection of essays which appeared in 1934 under the title Creative Mind, he adds a footnote to his Introduction to Metaphysics on the relation between scientific and philosophical knowledge.

"I have been led, since the time of writing these lines,<sup>396</sup>  
to/..

to restrict the meaning of the word "science", and to call more particularly scientific the knowledge of inert matter by pure intelligence. That does not prevent me from saying that the knowledge of life and of the mind is scientific to a large extent - to the extent that it calls on the same methods of investigation as the knowledge of inert matter. Conversely, the knowledge of inert matter can be called philosophical to the extent that it utilizes, at a certain decisive moment in its history, the intuition of pure duration."<sup>397</sup>

Science and metaphysics, or intelligence and intuition, are then two different approaches to, or manners of conceiving, the same unity of experience. This unity of experience is that which is given in immediate experience. This is not just the truism that my experience must in some sense be unitary because it is mine. We have seen that the unity of the self's duration cannot be thought simply in subjective terms, there is also given an immediate ante-predicative experience of the world in terms of extensity and duration prior to the formulation of the concepts of space and time, and within this given world there are also other centres of action. This is very like Strawson's "immediate environment" which is individuated by ourselves and our knowledge of our place in this spatio-temporal network. Bergson would agree that it was necessary for any activity properly called thinking to begin, that we should conceptualize our immediate experience of extensity and duration, that we should form the concepts of material bodies as basic particulars in our conceptual scheme. All that he would object to would be the identification of the concepts thus formed with what is given in immediate experience, or the assumption that these concepts constitute the framework of all knowledge.

How then are we to think of reality when we begin from immediate experience? What is "knowledge" from this stand-point? It has been suggested/..

suggested that we are to understand knowledge in terms of a scale, whose extremities would be indicated by the limiting case of pure intelligence and pure intuition. That is, knowledge is one, and we may, Bergson remarks in another footnote to the Introduction to Metaphysics, include everything in science or everything in metaphysics if we wish, but it is clear none the less that

"knowledge bears in a well-defined direction when it arranges its objects with measurement in view, and that it proceeds in a different, even opposite direction when it frees itself of any thought of relation and comparison in order to be in sympathy with reality."<sup>398</sup>

According to its tendency then, knowledge can be thought in terms of a scale from that which can be wholly or almost wholly understood in terms of a system of general concepts and symbols, to that which can only be understood by the most explicit reference to the enduring reality of the self in immediate experience.

Enough has been said already in exposition of the notion of scientific knowledge, both in respect of its attainment of the real, or absolute in its own proper field, and of its inadequacy in the field of life. We have seen what is the direction of this scale in terms of the increasing "participation" of the knower in the known, as we progress from, say, the subject matter of mathematical physics, through the recognition of material objects, of ordered physical and chemical processes, up to the recognition of life. We have also indicated that beyond this point there is a crucial gap or at least vagueness. For when all that Bergson says about the need for intuition in the recognition of living organisms is placed on this scale as a further stage in the increasing "participation" of the knower, the next step should obviously be the intuition or knower-participation implied in the recognition of persons.

This scale of knowledge is not the context in which the problem of persons arises for Bergson. The idea of a scale has been extracted from Bergson's metaphysics, and in particular his account of evolution, and we may briefly recall how the problem arises there.

The evolutionary movement was traced as a progress which was to be understood in terms of its end in human consciousness. Bergson points out two essential elements of this progress to consciousness. It is first a progress which results in the emergence of separate individuals whose individuality is yet to be understood in terms of its relation to the common impulse of life which has become dissociated into many "tendencies" in its contact with matter. He says that

"Unity and multiplicity are categories of inert matter, that the vital impetus is neither pure unity nor pure multiplicity, and that if the matter to which it communicates itself compels it to choose one of the two, its choice will never be definitive: it will leap from one to the other indefinitely. The evolution of life in the double direction of individuality and association has therefore nothing accidental about it: it is due to the very nature of life."<sup>399</sup>

We need not pause to go into all the points raised here, but simply note that for Bergson "humanity" is not a kind of construct out of particular instances of human beings. The apprehension of our common origin, of our sharing in "consciousness" is implicit in the immediate apprehension of the self's own duration. For the progress to individuality and association is also a "progress to reflexion", and this reflexion or consciousness,

"which is a need of creation, is made manifest to itself only where creation is possible."<sup>400</sup>

This means that the whole evolutionary progress, understood in terms of its/..

of its end, is to be seen as a continuous creation which has ended in the creation of creators. It is in this sense that man, in whom the life which is the origin of all things has become conscious, carries on the work of creation.

Thus the history of creative evolution does not end with the emergence of man.

"However radical the discontinuity between animality and humanity, it is the 'history of life' which continues: the same life in another history. Consequently, the vital impetus has not only what we call a natural history, it has also a human history. The author of *Creative Evolution*, to fulfil the promise of his title, should go on, in the extension of his cosmology, to unravel the history of humanity as the history of the vital impetus.

In this perspective, to write the continuation of Creative Evolution Bergson must know which are the human activities which manifest the creative power of life and especially which is that in which this power is most powerfully creative."<sup>401</sup>

Bergson's theory of persons then, the insufficiency of which we have noted, is not so much inadequate as incomplete. His whole picture of the world and man's place in it is to be completed by the study of the most characteristically human activities.

This does not mean however that we may not go on at this point at least to a sketch of what the continuation of Bergson's theory of knowledge must be. This is not simply a purely academic exercise. In a study of Bergson's philosophy of religion it will be useful to try to see the terms in which the problem of religion set itself to him, and also, by completing the sketch of the kind of epistemological position he arrived at before the study of morality and religion, we may be the better able to understand why this study took the course it did and perhaps see what other course it might have taken.



#### II.4 - Metaphysical Knowledge

The quotation from Gouhier above sums up the way in which the problem of "persons" arises in Bergson's own terms. In terms of the scale of knowledge referred to earlier the problem is that having understood the increasing knower-participation, which is a progressively greater need for explicit reference to immediate experience, in our knowledge of things from the knowledge of physics to knowing life, we find that the nature of "persons" has not been sufficiently fully characterized to enable us to see what is involved in knowing persons. Enough however has been said to enable us to see what the direction of this scale is, and so, while recognizing that the discussion of human life and activity is essential to the completion of this scale, we may go beyond such discussions and try to see at least in outline what kind of account could be given of the whole of our experience. How, given the fusion of intelligence and intuition in our ordinary knowledge, are we to understand the world-as-a-whole?

This question cannot be answered simply by repeating Bergson's figures about the emergence of consciousness, the intuition of supra-consciousness and so on. Those remarks were designed to reveal the essential element of intuition in our knowledge and to point out its "direction". The cosmological question is now being asked from within our ordinary experience, and is to be answered in terms of our ordinary knowledge which includes intelligence as well as intuition. The question is, given the elements of a definition of persons, what kind of a total interpretation can we give of a world which includes such persons within it.

There is no need to try to assemble here the elements Bergson has given of a definition of a human person. The essential word for the present/..

present purpose is that a person is a creator. In one sense Bergson's philosophy from Time and Free Will on has been a progressive expansion, illustration and justification of the view that the basic datum of consciousness is that we are free, active, creating beings.

What this means for a total interpretation of the world and life is that the world-as-a-whole cannot be described as any kind of determinate system. The radically new and unforeseeable is always being brought into being. To say that the world is not to be understood as a determinate system means that it cannot be conceived on the model of a machine or of an organism. It is here that Bergson's basic model seems inadequate for the task he has set himself. This inadequacy is summed up in the paradox of his title Creative Evolution. It was noted in our discussion of the words "creation" and "creative" when applied to the recognition of life that the radical "novelty" - in the sense of "unforeseeability" - of development of the forms of life and the actions of organisms meant that living organisms had to be understood teleologically.<sup>402</sup> It was also noted that "teleological" here did not need to be interpreted as implying any element of purpose, it meant simply that an organism must be understood as a whole, and that this whole included a temporal dimension. An organism is only "known" when it is known what it does and what it develops into.

But this conception of "creativity" is surely not wide enough for what Bergson means by the purposive creations of human beings. Our understanding of an organism is surely not an adequate model of our understanding of a world where the continuous unconscious emergence or "creation" of new forms is continued in the conscious purposive creations of persons. Bergson has indeed said that there is a radical distinction between the human and the animal, but he does not seem up to this point, to/..

to realize that this means that a conception of creation modelled on evolutionary emergence will not serve to characterize human creativity. The obvious reply to this is that Bergson is not so much modelling human creativity and freedom on evolutionary concepts as reading back human freedom into evolution. There is an element of truth in this, and its significance will be seen later, but we have argued that there is at least no need to interpret Bergson in this way, when the evolution of life is considered in itself, apart from its "end" in human consciousness.

A second rejoinder would be simply that this criticism is a repetition of what has been admitted already, that Creative Evolution raises rather than answers the question of the real nature of human creativity and freedom. This is true, but the criticism above is worth while suggesting now, since it will be seen that it is questionable if Bergson even in his later work ever quite resolves the incompatibility between the biological, organic framework within which he sets his thinking and the purposive creative ability he attributes to human beings.

It is important to realize however that even if his categories are inadequate Bergson is attempting to say something new. This is his insistence on the radical novelty involved in the idea of creation. The world-as-a-whole includes creators, ourselves, and our thought or knowledge of the world must take account of what we are. We are to ask then what it means to think the world-as-a-whole from the stand-point of creators. This means that we must place ourselves at the farther end of the scale of knowing from that purely symbolic type of knowledge which involved minimal reference to immediate experience. Here explicit account must be taken of that experience, since its content, our self-awareness, our existence as enduring creative beings, is included in what is to be thought or known.

This/..

This means of course that in one real sense we cannot think reality as a whole at all. For to think or know in the sense of apprehending in terms of symbols or concepts is ipso facto to determine what is known, and the admission of the indetermination of continuous creativity means that this is impossible. Reality can first be understood only from within, as we understand our own existence as duration, by installing ourselves in it, by living it. To know reality and our place in it is then to "take possession" of it and of ourselves. Our world is constituted for us not simply in terms of our "knowledge" of it in a conceptual sense but in terms of our intentions, of our volitions, aims, and our creative imagination, as well as of our thought. This is true of the whole range of knowledge, though as we have seen we may cut out of the whole of reality "isolated systems" which can for our ordinary purposes be described without explicit reference to the depth of immediate experience.

But philosophy is reflection, and if we are to think at all there must be some way of representing reality for a mind. It is indeed a condition of creative activity of any sort that there should be some such representation. This of course involves the activity of intelligence, but the point of the basic reference to lived experience is that we may see that reality can only be imaged rather than conceptualized. The incapacity of concepts to grasp the realities of change, life, creation and so on has already been discussed,<sup>403</sup> as well as the role of the image as a kind of pointer which directs the mind to immediate knowledge.<sup>404</sup> Further discussion of this must depend on a fuller exposition of how Bergson understands interpersonal relations and the nature of language as communication, and therefore must be left till his view of the nature of society has been examined in the next chapter. We can however perhaps make clearer Bergson's method and its implications for the knowledge of the/..



the world as a whole by means of two analogies.

Bergson makes very little reference to historiography in his writings, though at least one attempt has been made to sketch a philosophy of history implied in his work,<sup>405</sup> and Raymond Aron has referred to Bergson's influence on historians, at least in his own case and that of A. Toynbee.<sup>406</sup> A.D. Lindsay suggests however that historical enquiry provides an example which serves to make more clear Bergson's conception of philosophical method and knowledge. For history, like a philosophy which sets out to give an account of reality, must be based on scientific method. There are given facts which must be recognized, discovered collected. But history is more than a mere collection of facts -

"it is a synthesis of them - a synthesis for which there are no rules; its success depends on the individual insight of the historian, and on his intimate and long acquaintance with the facts to be synthesized."

It is the sense given to the facts by the historian, his making of them intelligible, which makes a history what it is. It must be comprehensive, but the real test of its truth, its verification, is in the end its coherence or intelligibility. In this it is like philosophy.

"Philosophic intuitions must be faithful to the facts of science; whether they are so or not only science can tell us. It must also make us understand these facts, and there is no fact which will tell us that that is accomplished save the process itself."<sup>407</sup>

Whether this is an adequate account of history or not, it does at least help to clarify some aspects of Bergson's theory of intuition. Bergson himself suggests another example which brings us nearer to what is essential for the understanding of his view of knowledge. In the Introduction to Metaphysics he suggests the analogy of literary composition as a means to understanding the intuition of reality. When a subject has been/..



been studied, notes taken and all materials prepared

"something more is necessary to get down to the work of composition itself: an effort, often painful, immediately to place oneself in the very heart of the subject and to seek as deeply as possible an impulsion which, as soon as found, carries one forward of itself. This impulsion, once received, sets the mind off on a road where it finds both the information it had gathered and other details as well; it develops, analyzes itself in terms whose enumeration follows on without limit; the farther one goes the more is disclosed about it; never will one manage to say everything: and yet, if one turns around suddenly to seize the impulsion felt, it slips away; for it was not a thing but an urge to movement, and although indefinitely extensible, it is simplicity itself. Metaphysical intuition seems to be something of the same kind. What in this case matches the notes and documents of the literary composition, is the collection of observations and experiences gathered by positive science and above all by a reflection of the mind on the mind".<sup>408</sup>

This analogy may be developed with reference to the writing of autobiography. The illustration is particularly apt since the primary example Bergson gives of intuition is the self's knowledge of its own duration.

In a recent study,<sup>409</sup> R. Pascal has analysed autobiography in terms not simply of a particular literary form or a particular psychological manifestation, but as the "account of the truth of a life".<sup>410</sup> We cannot take account of all of the types of autobiography he classifies, or even of all the characteristics of any one type. But certain points may prove illuminating for the account of what it is for Bergson to know reality.

We may notice first of all that a good autobiography is not simply a recapitulation of the events of the life of the author. There is of course/..

course an "objective history", of any given individual life as there is of the life of society, just as there is a sum of facts or states of affairs which "constitute" the world in one sense. But autobiography is a selection from this history and a selection frequently in the interests of self-knowledge. As in the case of the writing of history, the act of selection and synthesis leads to fuller understanding. Pascal refers to Collingwood's autobiography as

"the opposite of contemplative recapitulation or indulgent recollection, for it is an essay in interpretation, a means of discovering a sense in his life of which the author was not fully aware before he began to write. Through it he organises his past experiences according to a scale of value he has only lately established, and extracts from them a meaning of which he was not conscious at the time of their incidence."<sup>411</sup>

This means that self-knowledge arrived at is something more than even a synthesis of "facts" already known, it is a discovery of new knowledge, of a new reality. Even the word "discovery" however only points to one aspect of what is happening. It implies that what is known is in some sense there to be discovered. But it is also evident that the activity of discovering itself contributes to what is discovered.

"The autobiography is not simply a statement of what a man was and is ... It is an active contribution, not a closing of accounts."<sup>412</sup>

This means in turn that the manner of our knowing not simply ourselves but the world about us cannot be understood on the model of our knowledge of things.

"It is not necessarily or primarily an intellectual or scientific knowledge, but a knowing through the imagination, a sudden grasp of reality through reliving it in the imagination, an understanding of the feel of life, the feel of living .... Muir and Spender/..

Spender both say it is impossible to know oneself. What they mean is that one cannot come to a scientific or "discursive" knowledge of oneself and the meaning of one's life. But their autobiographies do give a different sort of knowledge, an intuitive knowledge that is quite as true as any other sort, and as important as far as the job of living is concerned."<sup>413</sup>

The last phrase of the quotation indicates the final point that we may notice, which is that the meaning of this act of self-discovery refers not simply to what a man was and is, but also to what he will be. If he not only discovers but decides what he is then there is necessarily a future reference. The meaning of this decision is only made plain in future acts, the truth of his discovery is only verified by what he becomes.

This analogy must not be pressed too far, though it would be interesting to follow it out in various ways. We might compare for instance those episodes of a man's life which are later judged to have been sterile, uncreative, contributing little or nothing of significance to what he now is - yet which remains inescapably "part" of him, to Bergson's view of certain episodes or directions of the creative impulse which have taken "wrong turnings", and have become fixed in automatism or vegetable torpor - though these also form a necessary part of our understanding of the whole.

It will be better however to try to elicit those positive points in the analogy which can contribute to the understanding of what it is to know reality as a whole. These are particularly the peculiar logical features of knowing in the sense of knowing oneself. There is first the fact that the ordinary distinction between subject and object is broken down or blurred. There is a sense in which self-knowledge requires at least an attempt at an "objective" view of oneself and the events of one's life/..

life, but equally essential is the reliving, recreating, of experience if it is to lead to discovery, to new knowledge of the self.

For Bergson also there is in knowing reality something of this blurring of the distinction between subject and object. It is true of course that reality is not co-terminous with myself, but if I am within the reality to be known then I cannot stand off from it and know it wholly apart from myself. There must be some element of reliving not only my own past experience, but of sympathy with the life or development of that which is to be known.

Secondly, when I come to know myself, to discover the reality of my own life, this is not simply a seeing of what is there, but is also an active contribution to that reality. The act in which I see also makes what is to be seen. It is not too much to say that this act of understanding, interpreting my life alters the character of that which is past. I can of course try to "cut off" particular episodes, even whole tracts of experience, to treat them as "isolated systems", and therefore as objective and unalterable, but in so far as I am inescapably my past, then a change of any depth in what I am now does seem to imply that my past is now other than it was.

The rejoinder to this, drawing a distinction between "seeing" and "seeing as" assumes the issue, since it is precisely the possibility of "seeing" the events of my life from some purely "objective" standpoint that is in question.

Now obviously there are differences between my "making" of what I am and my "making" of reality. But at this point also Bergson's stand-point seems to involve a further blurring of the distinction between subject and object, this time in the sense in which it implies a crucial logical/..

logical distinction between perceiving and making or constructing. The world is of course "objective" in a sense in which my past life is not, but it cannot be wholly "objective", since I am within it. To make it objective is to determine it in thought and therefore to distort it by leaving out of account myself and others as creators. But what is being created, what is becoming, affects our understanding of, indeed alters the character of, what is, so that again we can only understand reality by being aware of this "becoming" and our past in it.

This leads on to the final point to be noticed in the autobiographical example. It was seen that when the object of knowledge is the self, and when "knowing" involves, as it must in this case, an element of decision for, choice of, construction of, what is known, then the test of the truth of what is known in this case can only lie in the future. The verification of my knowledge of myself is not wholly independent of future decisions and future acts. I can, and indeed normally do delude myself about "what I am" and what I have been, but however much verification or falsification of my self-understanding may depend upon the reports of others, "objective" records of occurrences and so on, we are concerned at the moment with that element of verification which is necessarily not yet given. My understanding of myself contains a necessary reference to the future.

This also seems to be an element in Bergson's understanding of how reality is to be known. This is the meaning of the immediate experience of ourselves as creators. There is a radical indetermination of reality. In the Introduction to Metaphysics he rejects any understanding of reality which would include even as possibility that which is not yet in being. The real precedes the possible.

"The/..



"The fault of those doctrines, rare indeed in the history of philosophy - which have succeeded in leaving room for indetermination and freedom in the world, is to have failed to see what their affirmation implied. When they spoke of indetermination, of freedom, they meant by indetermination a competition between possibles, by freedom a choice between possibles - as if possibility was not created by freedom itself. As if any other hypothesis, by affirming an ideal pre-existence of the possible to the real, did not reduce the new to a mere rearrangement of former elements. As if it were not thus to be led sooner or later to regard that rearrangement as calculable and foreseeable. By accepting the premises of the contrary theory one was letting the enemy in. We must resign ourselves to the inevitable: it is the real which makes itself possible, and not the possible which becomes real."<sup>414</sup>

What this rather obscure passage seems to mean in terms of the theory of knowledge is that however much we may refer our understanding of reality to "experience" in the sense of an established conceptual schema, our knowledge of reality as a whole, including ourselves and other creators, can only be in our whole activity as creators. This knowledge is tested, enlarged, not in thought alone but in life itself, in particular in those activities by which we constitute ourselves and recognize ourselves as characteristically human. An individual's character can be regarded from outside as genetically and socially determined - and "outside" here can mean the individual's retrospect of his own life as well as another person's appraisal - yet he himself is aware of choice and decision, of a creative dynamic element which is hidden from the "outside" view. So also reality can be regarded from "outside" but it is only understood by a sympathy with its becoming, its ongoing creativity.

We are now able to see the necessity, for the completion of his account, of Bergson's analysis of characteristically human activities. This/..

This he gave in the Two Sources of Morality and Religion. As many questions have been raised as answers given in this account of his epistemology. What of the question of language for instance, the suggestion of a scale of knowing from that which is most "objective" to that which requires explicit personal involvement suggests a scale or continuum of statement from "matters of fact" to "matters of imagination". This kind of formulation makes more pressing the question, which we have only touched on, of verification. These questions however, cannot be dealt with now, and they are only mentioned to emphasize again the crucial nature for Bergson's whole philosophy of his account of Morality and Religion, which is the subject of the next chapters.

## CHAPTER IV

### CLOSED AND OPEN MORALITY

#### I.1 - Introduction

The Two Sources of Morality and Religion was first published in 1932, twenty-five years after Bergson's third major work Creative Evolution. It has been said that

"Bergson writes each of his books in forgetfulness of all the others, and without troubling himself over the inconsistencies which can sometimes arise from their succession. Bergson goes into each problem as if this problem were the only one in the world, follows to the end each 'line of facts' independently of the other lines."<sup>415</sup>

The question is still debated to what extent Bergson may have bent the "lines of facts" in order to fit them into his metaphysical or cosmological theories, but in justice to him it must be said that his method is prima facie at least a strictly empirical one and that he does not explicitly argue from conclusions established in one field to the solution of problems in another.

Bergson's last major work was Morality and Religion, on which he appears to have spent many years of research.<sup>416</sup> As early as 1912, in a letter to Father de Tonquédec, Bergson made clear his attitude to his studies of moral and religious problems. He had been asked if he had anything to add to an earlier letter in which he had commented on the references to God in Creative Evolution.

"I see nothing to add at the moment, as a philosopher, because philosophical method, as I understand it, is to be meticulously traced upon experience (interior and exterior) and does not permit a conclusion which goes in the smallest degree beyond the empirical considerations on which it is founded."

In an interesting passage Bergson goes on to show how he believes his earlier works combine at least to suggest the idea of God.

"The considerations set out in Time and Free Will conclude by bringing to light the fact of free-will; those of Matter and Memory indicate clearly, I hope, the reality of spirit; those of Creative Evolution present creation as a fact: all this gives rise clearly to the idea of a God creator and free, generator both of matter and of life, whose creative effort continues through life, by the evolution of species and the constitution of human personalities."

But, Bergson says, to expand and clarify these conclusions,

"it would be necessary to take up problems of quite another kind, the problems of ethics. I am not sure ever to publish anything on this subject; I shall only do so if I reach results which appear to me to be as demonstrable, or as 'showable' (monstrables) as those of my other works."<sup>417</sup>

In order to arrive at conclusions which will be evident, "monstrables", Bergson begins his discussion of morality and religion not with an examination of ethical theory or religious dogma, but with a consideration of morality, its nature and function, in its sociological and biological context. It is the consideration of the nature of morality, and the distinction which is drawn between two types of morality, the closed and the open, which appear to have led Bergson to make his radical distinction between static and dynamic religion.

## I.2 - Moral Obligation

The account of the nature of moral obligation begins with a comparison of a society or community to an organism.

"This however can only be a comparison, for an organism subject to inexorable laws is one thing, and a society composed of free wills another. But, once these wills are organized, they assume/..

assume the guise of an organism; and in this more or less artificial organism habit plays the same role as necessity in the works of nature. From this first stand-point, social life appears to us a system of more or less deeply rooted habits, corresponding to the needs of the community. Some of them are habits of command, most of them are habits of obedience, whether we obey a person commanding by virtue of a mandate from society, or whether from society itself, vaguely perceived or felt, there emanates an impersonal imperative. Each of these habits of obedience exerts a pressure on our will. We can evade it, but then we are attracted towards it, drawn back to it, like a pendulum which has swung away from the vertical. A certain order of things has been upset, it must be restored. In a word, as with all habits, we feel a sense of obligation."<sup>418</sup>

Bergson insists that the relation between the role of moral obligation in human society and the role of instinct and nature in an organism is no more than an analogical one. Nevertheless it is in this way that moral obligation is first of all to be understood. The force of social obligation is immeasurably greater than that of other habits. This is because any individual obligation or duty borrows its weight, its authority, from the totality of all our social obligations. It thus almost comes to assume the character of a physical necessity. Bergson points out how physical laws come to be thought of as "governing" the facts which "obey" the laws, and suggests that just as physical law, which in itself is simply a systematic description of phenomena, comes to assume an imperative character, so obligation by a kind of reversal of this process, comes to assume something of the necessary character of physical law.

"Between them the two ideas, coming together in our minds, effect an exchange. The law borrows from the command its prerogative of compulsion; the command receives from the law its inevitability. Thus a breach of the social order assumes an anti-natural character/..



character; even when frequently repeated, it strikes us as an exception, being to society what a freak creation is to nature."<sup>419</sup>

Moral obligation is thus a kind of force which regulates and maintains society. It is first of all a system of habits, and the sense in which duty or obligation is experienced as a harsh constraint is the exception rather than the rule.

"It is society that draws up for the individual the programme of his daily routine. It is impossible to live a family life, follow a profession, attend to the thousand and one cares of the day, do one's shopping, go for a stroll, or even stay at home, without obeying rules and submitting to obligations. Every instant we have to choose and we naturally decide on what is in keeping with the rule. We are hardly conscious of this; there is no effort. A road has been marked out by society; it lies open before us, and we follow it; it would take more initiative to cut across country. Duty, in this sense, is almost always done automatically; and obedience to duty, if we restrict ourselves to the most usual case, might be defined as a form of non-exertion, passive acquiescence."<sup>420</sup>

But of course there are cases where the fulfilling of obligation requires effort, where moral demands conflict with individual desires. This experience is so general that it has become almost part of the meaning of words like "duty" or "obligation". Furthermore, however "natural" the fulfilment of most obligations may have become, this is not due to any biological necessity, as the necessity for the training and education of children shows. Bergson is even prepared to allow that we may "set up as a practical maxim that obedience to duty means resistance to self". But a maxim is not a definition.

"When in order to define obligation, its essence and its origin, we lay down that obedience is primarily a struggle with self, a state of tension or contraction, we make a psychological error/..

error which has vitiated many theories of ethics. Thus artificial difficulties have arisen, problems which set philosophers at variance and which will be found to vanish when we analyse the terms in which they are expressed. Obligation is in no sense a unique fact, incommensurate with others, looming above them like a mysterious apparition. If a considerable number of philosophers, especially those who follow Kant, have taken this view, it is because they have confused the sense of obligation, a tranquil state akin to inclination, with the violent effort we now and again exert on ourselves to break down a possible obstacle to obligation."<sup>421</sup>

It is not important at this point to discuss to what extent Kant or Kantian theorists intend the concepts of "duty" or the "categorical imperative" to be understood in terms of individual or social psychology. Bergson's rejection of the Kantian approach does however demonstrate the meaning of his own empirical method. Instead of arguing from a single instance or from any paradigm case of moral obligation he points out first the elementary fact that the life of people in societies is built upon a foundation of habit, that in practice most people conform most of the time to socially acceptable norms of behaviour with no conscious feeling of obligation. The feeling of obligation only arises when there is a resistance to what would otherwise be done by habit. Obligation is the resistance to this resistance. Both the inner resistance to habit; and the resistance to the resistance, which is obligation, arise in man in virtue of his intelligence. Because man is an intelligent being he gives reasons for those actions in which he denies his own desires. But because obligation is thus resolved into rational elements it does not follow that obligation is of a rational order. Bergson is convinced, as was Hume, that "reason is .... the slave of the passions". The force which asserts itself is that

"which/..

"which we have called the totality of obligation; the concentrated extract, the quintessence of innumerable specific habits of obedience to the countless particular requirements of social life. This force is no one particular thing and, if it could speak (whereas it prefers to act), it would say: 'You must because you must'."

Hence the work done by intelligence in weighing reasons, comparing maxims, going back to first principles, was to introduce more logical consistency into a line of conduct subordinated by its very nature to the claims of society; but this social claim was the real root of obligation.

"Never, in our hours of temptation, should we sacrifice to the mere need for logical consistency our interest, our passion, our vanity. Because in a reasonable being reason does indeed intervene as a regulator to assure this consistency between obligatory rules or maxims, philosophy has been led to look upon it as a principle of obligation. We might as well believe that the fly-wheel drives the machinery."<sup>422</sup>

This, Bergson says, is his first point in the definition of the nature of obligation, that its essence is a different thing from a requirement of reason. It has been suggested that what he means by this is that it must first of all be understood as a social phenomenon. By this is meant not only that obligation is only meaningful in its function in the context of a community or a society, but also that the nature of obligation is only understood when it is seen first as a whole. This is seen in Bergson's insistence that the authority or weight of the "totality of obligation" is present in any particular obligation. We cannot argue from the rational or psychological ground of any particular duty to the nature of obligation as a whole, but must rather understand the place of the whole system of social habits, laws and duties in the life/..

life of society and interpret particular obligations first in the light of this.

This point is illustrated by a comparison of the life of human society to the life of the bees of a hive or the ants of an ant-hill.

"Whether human or animal, a society is an organization; it implies a co-ordination and generally also a subordination of elements; it therefore exhibits, whether merely embodied in life or, in addition, specifically formulated, a collection of rules and laws. But in a hive or an ant-hill the individual is rivetted to his task by his structure, and the organization is relatively invariable, whereas the human community is variable in form, open to every kind of progress. The result is that in the former each rule is laid down by nature, and is necessary: whereas in the latter only one thing is natural, the necessity of a rule. Thus the more, in human society, we delve down to the root of the various obligations to reach obligation is general, the more obligation will tend to become necessity, the nearer it will draw, in its peremptory aspect, to instinct. And yet we should make a great mistake if we tried to ascribe any particular obligation, whatever it might be, to instinct. What we must perpetually recall is that, no one obligation being instinctive, obligation as a whole would have been instinct if human societies were not, so to speak, ballasted with variability and intelligence. It is a virtual instinct, like that which lies behind the habit of speech."<sup>423</sup>

It is not necessary to explore the possible meaning of what obligation "would have been" were it not what it is. The main point is clear enough, obligation is to be interpreted on the analogy of instinct, in that social obligation has a function in society like that of the instincts of ants or bees.

This analogy makes clear a further point. As a "virtual instinct", moral obligation has no specifically moral character. Though no particular rule or obligation is necessary, it does appear necessary, or natural/..



natural, that there should be rules. This is implicit in the recognition that man is a societary being, but it is in no way a denial of free-will.

"A human being feels an obligation only if he is free, and each obligation, considered separately, implies liberty. But it is necessary that there should be obligations; and the deeper we go, away from those particular obligations which are at the top, towards obligation in general, or, as we have said, towards obligation as a whole, which is at the bottom, the more obligation appears as the very form assumed by necessity in the realm of life, when it demands, for the accomplishment of certain ends, intelligence, choice, and therefore liberty."<sup>424</sup>

Bergson's argument up to this point can be summed up in a single sentence, that moral obligation as a whole is a kind of social instinct. The specific points he has made are; first, that moral obligation must be understood as a whole; secondly, that it can only be understood in its context in human society; and, thirdly, that the comparison with instinct indicates that obligation is essentially non-rational and is not specifically moral.

Bergson insists, as it is perhaps hardly necessary to do now, on the non-hereditability of acquired characteristics so that

"civilized man differs, above all, from primitive man by the enormous mass of knowledge and habits which he has absorbed, since the first awakening of his consciousness, from the social surroundings in which they were stored up. What is natural is in great measure overlaid by what is acquired; but it endures, almost unchangeable, throughout the centuries; habits and knowledge by no means impregnate the organism to the extent of being transmitted by heredity, as used to be supposed. It is true that we could consider what is natural as negligible in our analysis of obligation, if it had been crushed out by the acquired habits which have accumulated over it in the course of centuries of civilization. But it remains in excellent condition, very much alive, in the most civilized society./..



society. To it we must revert, not to account for this or that social obligation, but to explain what we have called obligation as a whole. Our civilized communities, however different they may be from the society to which we were primarily destined by nature, exhibit indeed, with respect to that society, a fundamental resemblance."<sup>425</sup>

Bergson characterizes this resemblance of civilized to primitive communities by saying that they are both closed societies. By this is meant that our social duties and obligations are to be seen first of all as serving to maintain social cohesion, to maintain and preserve the particular society of which they are a part. The closed society, however large or small, characteristically includes at any given moment a certain number of individuals and excludes others, and the distinction between those inside and those outside the society is reflected in the social mores and duties of the community. Thus social cohesion is largely due to the necessity for a community to protect itself and its members against others, and it is

"primarily as against all other men that we love the men with whom we live."<sup>426</sup>

### I.3 - Two Sources of Morality

It is evident that morality cannot be wholly accounted for in terms of the kind of pure obligation Bergson has analysed. In particular, the notion of an obligation owed to other men simply as men cannot be derived from this source.

"A psychology which is too purely intellectualist, following the indications of speech, will doubtless define feelings by the things with which they are associated; love for one's family, love for one's country, love of mankind, it will see in these three inclinations one single feeling, growing ever larger, to embrace/..

embrace an increasing number of persons. The fact that these feelings are outwardly expressed by the same attitude or the same sort of motion, that all three incline us to something, enables us to group them under the concept 'love', and to express them by one and the same word; we then distinguish them by naming three objects, each larger than the other, to which they are supposed to apply. This does in fact suffice to distinguish them. But does it describe them? Or analyse them? At a glance, consciousness perceives between the two first feelings and the third a difference of kind. The first imply a choice, therefore an exclusion; they may act as incentives to strife, they do not exclude hatred. The latter is all love."<sup>427</sup>

Social instinct then, which is at the root of moral obligation, cannot itself account for the whole content of what we call morality. There is another source.

"In all times there have arisen exceptional men, incarnating this morality. Before the saints of Christianity, mankind had known the sages of Greece, the prophets of Israel, the Arahants of Buddhism, and others besides. It is to them that men have always turned for that complete morality which we had best call absolute morality. And this very fact is at once characteristic and instructive, this very fact suggests to us the existence of a difference of kind and not merely one of degree between the morality with which we have been dealing up to now and that we are about to study, between the maximum and the minimum, between the two extremes. Whereas the former is all the more unalloyed and perfect precisely in proportion as it is the more readily reduced to impersonal formulae, the second, in order to be fully itself, must be incarnate in a privileged person who becomes an example. The generality of the one consists in the universal acceptance of a law, that of the other in a common imitation of a model."<sup>428</sup>

The two last quotations resume a number of the characteristic differences between the two types of morality. Perhaps the best method of/..

of exposition of the second type is by contrast with the first. There is a difference first of all in the experience of obligation.

"Whereas natural obligation is a pressure or a propulsive force, complete and perfect morality has the effect of an appeal."<sup>429</sup>

Such an appeal is typically that of a person, a great moral personality. It does not seem that the influence exerted by such a person is easily reduced to a system of rules or maxims, so that the differences between the two types of morality can be put in another way by saying that the one is codifiable, is essentially the compulsion to obey a rule or law, while the other is the aspiration to resemble a personal model. This is to say that the first morality is merely social - by which Bergson means it is to be understood on the analogy of the social instinct of the hive or ant-hill, while the other is human, that is involves capacities which are present only in persons as distinct from all other forms of life.

It is this aspect of the difference which underlies Bergson's best-known contrast, that between the closed and the open morality, the closed and the open soul. The first has a clearly defined object, definable in terms of individual and social preservation,

"it implies at the beginning a state of things in which the individual and society are not distinguishable. This is what enables us to say that the attitude to which it corresponds is that of an individual and a community concentrated on themselves. At once individual and social, the soul here moves round in a circle. It is closed."<sup>430</sup>

The other attitude, that of the open soul, is typified perhaps best in the love of humanity, in the command of Jesus to love one's neighbour, to love one's enemy.

Bergson points out that the injunctions of Jesus in the Gospels cannot be formulated into a systematic whole.

"The morality of the Gospels is essentially that of the open soul: are we not justified in pointing out that it borders upon paradox, and even upon contradiction, in its more definite admonitions? If riches are an evil, should we not be injuring the poor in giving them what we possess? If he who has been smitten on the one cheek is to offer the other also, what becomes of justice, without which, after all, there can be no 'charity'? But the paradox disappears, the contradiction vanishes, if we consider the intent of these maxims, which is to create a certain disposition of the soul."<sup>431</sup>

#### I.4 - Morality of Aspiration

This summary statement of some of the obvious contrasts between the two types of morality raises many questions, but it will be better to pursue the exposition before returning to a critical analysis.

Bergson has distinguished the types of obligation in terms of their form and also of their content or object. He distinguished them also in terms of their origin. Natural obligation was seen to be rooted in habit or instinct. Beyond these

"there can be no direct action on the will except feeling,"<sup>432</sup> and the second type of morality springs from the creation in the moral agent of a new type of feeling.

The examples given to illustrate what is meant by the creation of "new emotions" are drawn from the arts and from the history of ideas. It is to be noted that it is the emotion which is new, and not an idea or "representation" which causes the emotion. This is most evidently the case in music, where the words and the ideas which describe it and the experience of listening to it are

"words/..

"words expressing generalities, words which we must call upon to express what music makes us feel, whereas each new musical work brings with it new feelings, which are created by that music, and within that music, are defined and delimited by the lines, unique of their kind, of the melody or symphony. They have therefore not been extracted from life by art; it is we who, in order to express them in words, are driven to compare the feeling created by the artist with the feeling most resembling it in life."<sup>433</sup>

This creation of new emotion is also possible when the emotion is aroused by an object more tangible or public than the experience of listening to music. There have always been mountains, trees, rivers. There have always been women, and men have been attracted to them in one way or another. But Rousseau seems to have made people feel something about mountains which they had not felt before; the influence of lyrical "nature poetry" predisposes us to emotion which owes as much to the poetry as to the natural beauty which appears to arouse it; even romantic love

"has a definite date: it sprang up during the Middle Ages on the day when some person or persons conceived the idea of absorbing love into a kind of supernatural feeling, into religious emotion as created by Christianity and launched by the new religion into the world."<sup>434</sup>

For emotion is not simply the consequence of an idea, a kind of affective reflection of a mental picture. There is also a kind of emotion which is rather a cause of ideas than their effect. It is emotion in this sense that lies behind creative work in all literature and even in science. It is an emotion

"which precedes the image, which virtually contains it, and is to a certain extent its cause. A play may be scarcely a work of literature and yet it may rack our nerves and cause an emotion/..



emotion of the first kind, intense, no doubt, but commonplace, culled from those we experience in the course of daily life, and in any case devoid of mental content. But the emotion excited within us by a great dramatic work is of quite a distinct character. Unique of its kind, it has sprung up in the soul of the poet and there alone, before stirring our own; from this emotion the work has sprung, to this emotion the author was continually harking back throughout the composition of the work. It was no more than a creative exigency, but it was a specific one, now satisfied once the work is finished, which would not have been satisfied by some other work unless that other has possessed an inward and profound resemblance with the former, such as that which exists between two equally satisfactory renderings, in terms of ideas or images, of one and the same melody."<sup>435</sup>

It might perhaps be granted on any view of aesthetic theory that any new development in artistic form or even technique must at least in part create the sensibility to which it appeals. Bergson's claim is that moral advance or development is made in the same way, not as a logical development from premisses already established, but from the new insights of such persons as prophets, mystics and other religious leaders, who have enlarged the moral sensibility of their followers as great artists have given new dimensions to aesthetic sensibility. It is always possible on reflection to trace the development of any new movements or symbols in art from their "origins" in earlier work, but this is possible only in retrospect. The innovations of great artists are rightly called "creations" in that they are not contained in, nor could have been predicted from, earlier work.

It may be objected that on Bergson's own showing there is or could be rational development in morality from say love of the family or group to love of humanity in general. It is to counter any such suggestion that/..

that Bergson insists that the new element in any moral advance is a new emotion, and that by this he means not simply the affective accompaniment of an idea or image, but another kind of emotion,

"which is not produced by a representation which it follows and from which it remains distinct. Rather is it, in relation to the intellectual states which are to supervene, a cause and not an effect; it is pregnant with representations, not one of which is actually formed, but which it draws or might draw from its own substance by an organic development. The first is infra-intellectual; that is the one with which the psychologist is generally concerned, and it is this we have in mind when we contrast sensibility with intelligence, and when we make of emotions a vague reflection of the representation. But of the other we should be inclined to say that it is supra-intellectual, if the word did not immediately and exclusively evoke the idea of superiority of value; it is just as much a question of priority in time, and of the relation between that which generates and that which is generated. Indeed, the second kind of emotion can alone be productive of ideas."<sup>436</sup>

Bergson uses an argument similar to that employed by ethical intuitionists against the "naturalistic fallacy". He points out that no definition of the good, no ethical doctrine, no metaphysical theories brought forward to support a moral theory, can of themselves compel the corresponding moral practice.

"No amount of speculation will create an obligation or anything like it: the theory may be all very fine, I shall always be able to say that I will not accept it; and even if I do accept it, I shall claim to be free and do as I please. But if the atmosphere of the emotion is there, if I have breathed it in, if it has entered my being, I shall act in accordance with it, uplifted by it; not from constraint of necessity, but by virtue of an inclination which I should not want to resist."<sup>437</sup>

It should be noted however that Bergson's point here is a psychological/..

psychological one in the first instance. His argument is equally valid against the kind of ethical intuitionism which claims that the good is a simple indefinable property. Even if it is granted that a given act has this property it is still possible sensibly to ask why I should do it. It can be replied on behalf of ethical intuitionism that the question "why should I do this", asked of an act which is admitted to have the property of the good, only makes sense if it refers to motivation and not to justification.

It is true that at this point Bergson's argument seems to bear more on the psychology of moral action than on the logic of moral judgments, but it becomes clear that he means emotion to carry more than a purely psychological interpretation. This emotion, seen most clearly in saints and mystics and prophets, the heroes of the moral life, is a kind of coincidence or contact with the "generative effort of life, .... the generative principle of the human species". It is thus of the nature of, or even identical with, the philosophical intuition which enables the mind to enter into and grasp the direction of the élan vital itself. The appearance of such men as the founders of the great religions of mankind marks a moral advance which is comparable in its unpredictability to the appearance of a new species in the evolution of life.

"Just as there have been men of genius to thrust back the bounds of intelligence, and thus, far more has been granted to individuals at certain intervals than it was possible to grant all at once to the species, so exceptional souls have appeared who sensed their kinship with the soul of Everyman, who thus, instead of remaining within the limits of the group and going no further than the solidarity laid down by nature, were borne on a great surge of love towards humanity in general. The appearance of each one of them was like the creation of a new species,/. .

species, composed of one single individual, the vital impulse culminating at long intervals in one particular man, a result which could not have been obtained at one stroke by humanity as a whole. Each of these souls marked then a certain point attained by the evolution of life; and each of them was a manifestation, in an original form, of a love which seems to be the very essence of the creative effort."<sup>438</sup>

The meaning and justification of "love" as the content or character of the creative effort will be examined later. For the present we may note that the grounding of moral emotion in the creative impulse of life itself appears to mean that Bergson would not accept the distinction just drawn between the motivation and the justification of moral judgement and action. This emotion is its own justification. It is antecedent to, and not dependent on, its expression in terms either of principles and maxims or of aims and ends. It is certainly possible, and indeed necessary, since men are rational beings, to attempt to formulate this emotion in these terms, but the result will be formulae that border on contradiction, as was noted in the case of the attempt to universalize some of the admonitions of Jesus. The difficulty here is the same as that encountered earlier in attempting to express the reality of movement and change in terms of the static and fixed. The attempt must be made; and our conceptual formulations will do very well for many purposes, but the reality is only grasped in an intuition which is more faithfully expressed in images than in concepts.

It is to be remembered of course that this intuition and aspiration is only part of what we mean by morality. Further, in discussing the two sources or elements of morality Bergson uses his usual method of sharp contrast. Aspiration and obligation are to be distinguished conceptually as the elements composing morality, but are not in fact clearly distinguishable in the moral practice of any individual or society.



"A mystic society, embracing all humanity and moving, animated by a common will, towards the continually renewed creation of a more complete humanity, is no more possible of realization in the future than was the existence in the past of human societies functioning automatically and similar to animal societies. Pure aspiration is an ideal limit, just like obligation unadorned."<sup>439</sup>

The nature of these two elements of morality must however be understood if we are to make sense of the concepts of duty and obligation. For at the conceptual level pressure and aspiration are fused.

"That which is aspiration tends to materialize by assuming the form of strict obligation. That which is strict obligation tends to expand and to broaden out by absorbing aspiration. Pressure and aspiration agree to meet for this purpose in that region of the mind where concepts are formed. The result is mental pictures, many of them of a compound nature, being a blend of that which is a cause of pressure and that which is an object of aspiration. But the result is also that we lose sight of pure pressure and pure aspiration actually at work on our wills; we see only the concept into which the two distinct objects have amalgamated, to which pressure and aspiration were respectively attached. The force acting upon us is taken to be this concept: a fallacy which accounts for the failure of strictly intellectualist systems of morality, in other words, the majority of the philosophical theories of duty."<sup>440</sup>

Bergson explicitly pleads for more linguistic analysis of moral concepts, but his own interest is not simply in disentangling the various logical functions of ethical words and phrases, but in making plain the psychological, sociological, and even biological realities which determine our usage. He illustrates this point by a lengthy analysis of the notion of justice. There is no need to follow him in his handling of the historical and sociological data. It is clear enough that there has been a development from primitive ideas to the modern concept which involves/..



involves such related notions as equality of rights and the sanctity of the person as such. Bergson's point is that we misunderstand the nature not only of social evolution, but also of our present moral concepts if we regard this process simply in terms of a rational evolution. Progress has rather been made by a double process of creative effort, flashes of insight, followed by consolidation and rationalization. Any advance or development in the general moral consciousness must depend on some individual insight.

"The first start has always been given by someone. It is no use maintaining that this leap forward does not imply a creative effort behind it, and that we have not to do here with an invention comparable with that of the artist. That would be to forget that most great reforms appeared at first sight impracticable, as in fact they were. They could only be carried out in a society whose state of mind was already such as their realization was bound to bring about; and you had a circle from which there would have been no escape, if one or several privileged beings, having expanded the social ego themselves, had not broken the circle and drawn the society after them."<sup>441</sup>

Such creative effort is akin to artistic creation. A new moral insight is in the first instance not a rational principle but an effort of imagination. It consists

"in supposing possible what is actually impossible in a given society, in imagining what would be its effect on the soul of society, and then inducing some such psychic condition by propaganda and example: the effect, once obtained, would retrospectively complete its cause; new feelings, evanescent indeed, would call forth the new legislation seemingly indispensable to their appearance, and which would serve to consolidate them. The modern idea of justice has progressed in this way by a series of individual creations which have succeeded through multifarious efforts animated by one and the same impulse."<sup>442</sup>

### I.5 - Morality and Life

Bergson's account of morality then is not so much an exercise in ethical theory as a kind of prolegomenon to such a theory. He remarks that much the same ethical maxims, approximating more or less to the generally accepted standards of morality, can be justified by argument from a wide variety of basic principles. This is due to the fact that philosophers have in general neglected the analysis of the real forces which are at work in the moral agent. Bergson's purpose is to reveal these forces rather than to construct any general theory of ethics.

What is essential for Bergson is not the analysis and justification of moral rules and principles as such, but the ontological or metaphysical questions raised by the nature of morality. His concern is not to justify the "ought" of morality by grounding it in the "is" of "nature" or the "generative principle of life", but to use the description of morality as a clue to the existence and nature of the principle of life or creative evolution. The dual nature of this morality points to the way in which man's place in nature is to be understood. Bergson sums up his analysis of the two sources of morality by saying that

"nature, setting down the human species along the line of evolution, intended it to be sociable, in the same way as it did the communities of ants and bees."<sup>443</sup>

The existence of intelligence in the human species makes no fundamental difference at this level to the organic structure of society as a whole. What is instinct in the animal becomes obligation in man, supported by habit and rationalization. It is of course the whole system that is compared to instinct, not any particular habit or action. This whole system of habit and obligation tends towards the maintenance and preservation of society.

"In/..

"In spite of humanity having become civilized, in spite of the transformation of society, we maintain that the tendencies which are, as it were, organic in social life have remained what they were in the beginning ..... it is for closed, simple societies that the moral structure, original and fundamental in man, is made."<sup>444</sup>

This in itself suggests that theorizing about morality cannot properly take place as it were in the void, in terms only of the nature of obligation, or of the rational ends and principles which guide our action. We must also refer to the whole function of morality, to "nature's intention". Bergson is careful to point out that he does not mean

"that nature has structurally speaking, designed or foreseen anything whatever. But we have the right to proceed like a biologist, who speaks of nature's intentions every time he assigns a function to an organ: he merely expresses thus the adequateness of the organ to the function."<sup>445</sup>

But this is only the first half of morality, and the second source also demands an explanation in terms not simply of the particular maxims, principles or actions it enjoins, but in terms of its whole function in the development of morality in human society. This other morality of aspiration "had no place in nature's plan". It is not to be explained in terms of the adequacy of an organ to function, but must be referred to a genuinely creative impetus.

The final page of Bergson's chapter on moral obligation best sums up how he believes the study of moral phenomena leads beyond morality to questions of ontology and cosmology.

"The foundations of human nature have been taken into account, whether considered statically in itself, or dynamically in its origin. The mistake would be to think that moral pressure and moral aspiration find their final explanation in social life/..

life considered merely as a fact. We are fond of saying that society exists, and that hence it inevitably exerts a constraint on its members, and that this constraint is obligation. But in the first place for society to exist at all the individual must bring into it a whole group of inborn tendencies; society therefore is not self-explanatory; so we must search below the social accretions, get down to Life, of which human societies, as indeed the human species altogether, are but manifestations. All becomes clear if we start by a quest beyond these manifestations for Life itself. Let us then give to the word biology the very wide meaning it should have, and will perhaps have one day, and let us in conclusion say that all morality, be it pressure or aspiration, is in essence biological."<sup>446</sup>

## II.1 - The Meaning of Social Morality

There is little point in criticising the inadequacies of Bergson's account of morality, since he apparently does not mean it to be systematically adequate as moral philosophy. He wishes to show that moral phenomena, social life, are not self-explanatory, to explain those we must "get down to life". Before going on to this enquiry it will be useful in this second section to sum up what appears to be the most philosophically interesting points made by Bergson in dealing with morality.

Points raised by the three stages of his argument may be considered. First the significance of social morality in itself, secondly the area of experience indicated by the morality of aspiration, and thirdly how these together can account for all of what is meant by morality.

His account of the nature of obligation is useful in reminding us not only of how most of our moral principles are learnt, how much of our moral conduct is in practice guided, but of the basis of the very concept of morality. Whether we employ Bergson's organic terminology and speak of/..

of social morality as a quasi-instinct, or refer to the psycho-analytic doctrine of the establishment of the super-ego, it is commonplace that any understanding of morality must refer at least for its genesis to the early training in the customs and moral attitudes of the society into which the individual is born. Now it may be true that philosophy only begins when reasons are sought for these socially determined rules and ends, but this does not mean that the pressure or compulsion exerted by society can thereafter be ignored.

Bergson has little to say about traditional moral philosophy. Kantians and Utilitarians are almost the only theorists mentioned, and his criticisms are hardly detailed enough to count as refutations of any particular theory. His work however may perhaps be more relevant to later developments in moral philosophy.

Hume in his Treatise set out clearly the logical impossibility of inference from statements of fact to statements involving moral judgments.<sup>447</sup> The criticism was more fully worked out by Moore,<sup>448</sup> in terms of the "naturalistic fallacy", and has since become almost axiomatic in the main current of moral philosophy in English at least.

The criticism of "naturalism" in ethics has been expressed in various forms, and with considerable refinements, but broadly it may be taken as the assertion of a clear logical distinction between the categories of fact and value such that no evaluative conclusion can be deduced from premises which are descriptive. This distinction is closely related to another, methodological, distinction, also accepted roughly since Moore, between normative ethics and meta-ethics. Most moral philosophers of the last fifty to sixty years have been occupied with ethics as the analysis of ethical language. It is being pointed out however that this method, despite the great advances in clarification that/..



that have been made, can lead to some odd conclusions. It seems prima facie that the distinction mentioned must be too sharply drawn or wrongly conceived if they can lead to the belief that

"in theory at least, absolutely anything could count as a moral opinion, or a moral principle, provided it was framed in the way laid down for such principles, and used, as they are used, to guide conduct."<sup>449</sup>

What this kind of dissatisfaction with current ethical theorizing suggests is that an empirical enquiry into the nature and function of morality in society is as relevant to ethical theory as is the analysis of moral language. A meta-ethical analysis of language which tries to remain neutral with regard to normative issues is likely to end with an account on which "almost anything could count as a moral opinion", but if on the other hand,

"it is laid down that some things do and some things do not, count in favour of a moral conclusion",<sup>450</sup>

an empirical enquiry as to what sort of things these are is surely in place.

Bergson is not concerned in his analysis of pure obligation to point to any property or characteristic, natural or non-natural, which defines "the good" or "the right" in the sense of giving its whole meaning, but points out that we learn the meaning of moral language by using it to describe certain attitudes, acts, and principles. Now if this is accepted it can surely be said that anything which is to count as a moral principle must bear some recognizable relation to these attitudes and principles. This relation furthermore, must be in terms of the content rather than simply the form. We are not here concerned to argue what this relation might be, but simply to make the negative/..

negative point that there can be no proper description of evaluations, recommendations, prescriptions or anything of this sort which does not take into consideration the objects of such evaluation. Of course Bergson is not alone in calling attention to these facts, but he differs from say a utilitarian like Mill in that though he conceives of social utility as a raison d'être of social morality as a whole, he recognises the complexity of motive, principle and goal which prompt human action even at this level. Furthermore, for Bergson social morality is only a part of a larger whole.

The first value then of Bergson's analysis of the nature of moral obligation is that it reminds us that the way in which we are taught to use moral terms, and in particular the objects to which these terms applied, must be at least relevant to the determination of what is or is not a moral principle. It was Hume who first quite clearly stated the logical impropriety of deriving an "ought" and an "is", but Hume also pointed out that

"the notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation."

When a man uses distinctively moral language, as contrasted with that which expresses only his own sentiments,

"he must ... depart from his private and particular situation, and must choose a point of view, common to himself with others."<sup>451</sup>

Bergson does not claim that social morality is all of morality, or that "the moral point of view" is to be defined in terms of his sociological and psychological analysis, but whatever the formal characterization of this point of view may be taken to be, it is doubtful if it can be defined without reference, explicit or implicit, to such analysis.

II,2 - Saints and Heroes

Bergson's account of social morality then is not so much an ethical theory as an indication of a factor which is perhaps unduly neglected in moral philosophy. This can also be said of the contrast he points to between the morality of obligation and the morality of aspiration. It is sometimes said<sup>452</sup> that Bergson's distinction between the open and the closed society cannot be sustained. It is not quite clear what this criticism means, since, as has been said, he makes clear that he does not intend to describe any actual or potential society as wholly one or the other. The very sharpness of the distinction however helps to point towards a class of moral phenomena which has received little attention in traditional ethical theory.

Bergson believes that change in the moral values of a society, moral advance, is due to the influence of individuals who by a creative effort of moral genius have broken through or enlarged the purely social morality or customary values of the society in which they live. Whatever may be thought of this thesis as a piece of social history, it does raise the question of the evaluation of actions and even of lives which cannot properly be described in terms of duties or of obedience to universalizable rules. J.O. Urmson among contemporary philosophers has made this point in an article interestingly entitled Saints and Heroes,<sup>453</sup> though there is no suggestion that he owes anything directly to Bergson. Urmson points out that we attribute a great or even supreme moral value to the life of such a person as St. Francis, or to the action of the soldier who throws himself upon a grenade about to explode in order to save the lives of his comrades.

According to Urmson traditional ethical theories fail to take account of this kind of evaluation. He suggests that such theories have/..

have in the main worked with a trichotomy of duties, indifferent actions, and wrongdoing. Sainly and heroic actions are conspicuous examples of the kind of action which found no place in this schema. Urmson further claims that in our ordinary moral thinking we make this distinction of basic duty from other acts of moral worth. He suggests that

"we may look upon our duties as basic requirements to be universally demanded as providing the only tolerable basis of social life. The higher flights of morality can then be regarded as more positive contributions that go beyond what is universally to be exacted; but while not exacted publicly they are clearly equally pressing in foro interno on those who are not content merely to avoid the intolerable."<sup>454</sup>

It may be that Urmson's trichotomy of duties, indifferent actions, and wrong-doing, does less than justice to what he calls traditional theory. Moral philosophers to-day are more apt to speak of "rules" than of "duties", and rules here do not mean simply rules of thumb. This however makes little difference to the basic point, prima facie at least, it does not seem much easier to interpret our approval of the heroic or saintly action as the endorsing of a rule, commendation of a universalizable programme for action, or expression of a resolution, than to interpret it as a basic requirement or duty.

This is not the point at which to examine the question in detail. The example of Urmson's article is only referred to in order to bring out the relevance of Bergson's distinction between the two moralities, and in particular the whole area of moral experience he refers to as the morality of aspiration, to contemporary moral philosophy.

### II.3 - The Moral Life

The full significance of the morality of aspiration is best seen in the context of Bergson's account of morality as a whole as a fusion of/..

of obligation and aspiration. It is by no means easy to state briefly all that Bergson means by aspiration. He makes little attempt to deal systematically with criteria which might form a system of appraisal for moral aspiration, and he moves from logical to moral to psychological argument without much differentiation between them. The model or paradigm case of aspiration however is seen in the case of the great saints and religious leaders, particularly in the Christian mystics. This morality is not to be contained in rule and maxim, they are

"moral creators who see in their minds eye a new social atmosphere, an environment in which life would be more worth living, I mean a society such that, if men once tried it, they would refuse to go back to the old state of things. Thus only is moral progress to be defined; but it is only in retrospect that it can be defined, when some exceptional moral nature has created a new feeling, like a new kind of music, and passed it on to mankind, stamping it with his own vitality."<sup>455</sup>

This morality is not to be defined in terms of a summum bonum at which it aims any more than it is to be defined in terms of rules, even though the creative emotion gives birth to ideas and ideals. It is

"inspiration, intuition, emotion, susceptible of analysis into ideas which furnish intellectual notations of it and branch out into infinite detail."

It is the emotion itself which is important. It is joy, an expansion of the soul, it

"contains the feeling of progress."<sup>456</sup>.

None of this of course has any specific moral content. The sense of progress, community, purpose evoked in adherents to the Communist Party or to Adolf Hitler's National Socialist movement fits as well with much of what Bergson says about the morality of aspiration as/...



as would the feelings evoked by a religious conversion. The normative element in the morality of aspiration is the emotion of love. It is love for humanity which is felt by the mystic and evoked in their followers. The saints and mystics are geniuses of the will and imagination who have broken through mere social solidarity to a sense of the brotherhood of man. They are

"exceptional souls .... who sensed their kinship with Everyman, who thus, instead of remaining within the limits of the group and going no further than the solidarity laid down by nature were borne on a great surge of love towards humanity in general."<sup>457</sup>

It is this emotion, this attitude towards other men which informs the accepted morality at least of the societies we call civilized. Even where the emotion of love towards humanity is not explicitly associated with any of the saints or religious leaders, it is nevertheless to them that we owe the element of attraction, aspiration which informs our morality.

"The general formula of morality accepted to-day by civilized humanity .... includes two things, a system of orders dictated by impersonal social requirements, and a series of appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons who represent the best there is in humanity."<sup>458</sup>

It is at the level of intelligence that these two systems intermingle and interpenetrate. Just as the quasi-instinctive obligation of social morality is rationalized into a kind of categorical imperative, so the emotion of love is represented by its projection in ideas and ideals. Morality thus becomes homogeneous, self-consistent, rational. But it must be remembered that the rational morality of rules and ends is no more than the conceptualization of something else.

"True mystics simply open their souls to the oncoming wave. Sure of themselves because they feel within them something better/..

better than themselves, they prove to be great men of action, to the surprise of those for whom mysticism is nothing but visions, and raptures and ecstasies. That which they have allowed to flow into them is a stream flowing down and seeking through them to reach their fellow-men; the necessity to spread around them what they have received affects them like an onslaught of love. A love which thus causes each of them to be loved for himself, so that through him, and for him, other men will open their souls to the love of humanity."<sup>459</sup>

These quotations give some idea of the difficulties attending the clear analysis of Bergson's doctrine. Perhaps the real interest of his work for ethical theory is in the fact that he attempts to do justice to such a wide range of moral phenomena. His account of social morality recognizes the non-rational, culturally determined element in the nature of obligation, but he attempts to combine this with an appeal to moral values, summed up in the idea of love, which are somehow objectively valid for all men. He recognizes the stringency of moral obligation, its character as claim, while insisting also on the aspect of creativity, of choice and vision which go beyond any idea of duty. Morality is seen to be concerned with purposes, ends, and the rational calculation of consequences, yet it is also concerned with will and emotion.

We have noted already however that Bergson's interest is not in morality itself, and he makes little attempt to give an analysis of moral principles which would do justice to all these elements. He wishes rather to use his description of the moral life to point beyond morality to the "principle" of human life itself. This is the central purpose of his examination of ethics and of religion, and it is to this question we must now turn.

### III.1 - The Generative Principle of Life

In the first two sections of this chapter, Bergson's account of the two sources of morality was expounded largely in his own terms, and the significance of his distinctions for ethical theory was noted. In this third section, however, which deals with the vital impetus and the possibility of conscious apprehension of its direction, a greater effort of interpretation is necessary. The understanding of the question given here is based on the interpretation of Creative Evolution offered in the last chapter and a fourth section will take this interpretation further as a preparation for the study of religion in the following chapter.

According to Bergson, even social morality is not explained simply by describing it as a social fact, but it is the consideration of the morality of aspiration and of the lives of moral creators which most explicitly raises the question of the understanding of "life itself", or the "generative principle of life". The mystics, who are the moral creators par excellence, can only be properly understood as being in contact with this principle. The meaning of this may be approached by noting the similarities and differences between Bergson's discussion and a more recent one of the "morality of aspiration". In the first of a group of essays printed in Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy,<sup>460</sup> R.W. Hepburn examines the suggestion that the analogy of aesthetic creation can form an alternative and perhaps better model for the understanding of the moral life than the more familiar rule model. Using as his data the autobiographies of poets and other writers, he points out how moral agents can see the moral life as pilgrimage or as the realizing of patterns, and how appeal is made to vision, to fable rather than to maxim or philosophical formulae. This aesthetic analogy does justice to the unique situation of the moral agent, and in particular to the element of creativity in/..

in the moral life, in the sense of self-creation, much more than does the rule model.

After indicating various ways in which an individual may be said to give "design" to life, Hepburn remarks that

"it may be claimed that the genuinely religious life most clearly exemplifies these and exhibits in addition other ways in which 'unity of being' can be achieved. The religious person has his vision of the good life, to the attainment of which all activity is subordinated. All the teachings and actions of the central figure of the religion are charged with the high solemnity and authority of his person. The solemnity is carried back into the believer's conception of what he is doing in performing the humblest moral action .... In meditation the believer disciplines his imagination, so as to bring into alignment his own unique conception of his life and the public fable of his faith."<sup>461</sup>

This suggestion raises many interesting questions, not all of which are relevant here. It may first be noticed however that the distinction made here corresponds in important ways with the distinction between the morality of aspiration and the morality of obligation. Bergson uses the example of the appeal of great moral personalities to illustrate what is meant by aspiration, and he explicitly uses the analogy of artistic creation to point the contrast between morality as realization of a vision or design and morality as obedience to a rule.

This raises the question, with which Hepburn briefly deals, of the relation between these two, whether the fable is

"a picturesque embroidery upon the rule, or is the rule a legalised, abstracted version of the fable, or are the two equally legitimate models."

In answer to this Hepburn points out, as was noted in connection with Urmson's remarks on traditional ethical theory, that "rule" is not necessarily/..

necessarily "rule of thumb". The rule model in ethics may mean rather the "feature dependent" nature of moral judgements. It

"claims to refer to the necessary logical form of any judgement which can meaningfully be called 'moral'"

so that

"a judgement expressed in fable, parable, is just as inescapably a 'decision of principle', the endorsing of a rule, the expression of a resolution, as any other moral judgement. If a story is entertained as a parable, it is seen not as a set of events which happened in the past, not as facts about the world, but as the commendation of a universalizable programme for action in any similar case to the case cited. Therefore it is irrelevant whether or not the events of the parable happened in history: to entertain it morally is to be indifferent to the question."<sup>462</sup>

So then, far from replacing or conflicting with the rule model, the parable model assumes it, even though the person using the parable may not formulate his parable as a rule.

We need not go into the question of whether or not this interpretation of parable stretches the notion of rule to a point of extreme abstraction. What is interesting for the interpretation of Bergson is the point raised by the latter part of the quotation from Professor Hepburn. Though he grants that

"one parable is never logically equivalent to the expression of one maxim; built into it, often with remarkable economy of words are 'flash backs' of the total way of life to which it belongs, and even sometimes aids to its implementation",<sup>463</sup>

he denies that the parable need have any more descriptive content than a rule. The descriptive content can be imagery only, with perhaps a real psychological function but with none in terms of the expression of facts about the world.

Bergson's/..



Bergson's aspiration is more than the effort of imagination, the aesthetic attitude to morality which the parable model is thus reduced to. Though he makes much of the creative aspect of moral insight, of the analogy between the vision of the mystic and the vision of the artist, it is clear that he understands moral advance as a process of discovery and not only a process of creation. The vision of the mystic which he shares with his followers is clearly in Bergson's view some sort of fact about the world. He expresses this by saying that the mystic draws his inspiration from the generative principle of life, or that he is aware of the forward movement of life itself. This awareness of the generative principle of life is further specified as an emotion, the emotion of love for humanity.

When stated as baldly as this it seems that there are a number of steps missing from the argument. It is true that Bergson does not go to much trouble to show that "love for humanity" is the common element in the teachings of all the great moral innovators, it is also true that the virtual identification of this love with the generative principle of life is hardly more than an unsupported assertion, the meaning of which is not too easy to grasp. The argument here however is of central importance for Bergson's theory of ethics and for his philosophy of religion, so an effort must be made to understand what is meant. If Bergson means his account of the morality of aspiration to be understood as having some descriptive content, expressing some kind of factual statement about the world, we need to ask what kind of factual statement this is and what relevance it has for ethics and for his philosophy as a whole.

Without prejudice to any wider implications of the term, it is evident that the principle of life which the mystic or religious leader is aware of or open to implies some reference to human nature. When the/..

the mystic is said to be conscious of his oneness with all humanity this makes explicit a fact which is assumed in any moral theory. This is simply the fact of the existence of human life with its characteristic activities and purposes. Moral language only has significance in the world of persons who desire, choose and value certain things, and any use of or description of such language implies an acquaintance with the context in which these terms have application.

Bergson however is saying much more than this. In his account of the morality of aspiration and its relation to the principle of life itself he appears to be making assertions of different orders. There is first the ontological assertion that there exists a principle or telos of human nature such that all men can find in it the fulfilment of what they essentially are; secondly the assertion that there is a way of knowing what this principle or telos is, demonstrated particularly in the lives and teachings of mystics and other religious leaders.

These two assertions, ontological and epistemological, are really one. In order to understand how this is so it will be useful to recall part of the argument of the preceding chapter. It will be remembered that in Creative Evolution, Bergson painted a picture of the world and in particular of life in the world, in terms of the history of the élan vital or vital principle, which from a single primitive impulse had proliferated in innumerable directions, marked by the genera and species of living things, and has at last broken through to consciousness and reflection in man. This cosmological theory or image was seen to be best interpreted in epistemological terms. The characteristics of life, of the vital principle, were taken to be characteristics of the intuition necessary if the knowing mind was to apprehend the nature of life at all.<sup>464</sup> So it was suggested that the idea of a scale of realities/..

realities from matter to consciousness implicit in Bergson's philosophy be understood as a scale or continuum of knowledge from that which is most nearly "objective", for instance mathematical knowledge, to that which can only be understood by the most explicit reference to the reality of the self in immediate experience.

Now though no full account was attempted in Creative Evolution of the knowledge of persons or the nature of personal being, we have nevertheless been given, in the discussion of life in Chapter III, of consciousness and memory in Chapter II, and of freedom in Chapter I, some indication of how statements about persons and about human nature are possible.

To know life is to recognize individuality, which is essentially the irreducibility of the whole to a sum of its parts. This whole individual is further to be understood in a temporal dimension, as enduring and also as creative. To these in the case of a person must be added such elements as consciousness and freedom. A person is not only a unity which endures, that is, is to be understood in terms of direction, but he has or can have a conscious willed direction. He is free, which means that his life is not only creation in the sense of the mere occurrence of the new and unforeseeable, but in the sense that his creation are acts, willed and chosen by him.

All these elements are involved in our knowledge of ourselves and of other persons. For it was noted earlier that some knowledge or understanding of what is meant by common human nature is a condition of any use of moral language. It was indeed argued in the preceding chapter that the use of any language to make any statements about the world implies to a greater or lesser degree a reference to our own existence as persons. In the words of Strawson, whose argument was used/..

used to elucidate Bergson, persons are primary unanalysable particulars. Anything I think or say about the world has some kind of implicit reference to myself as a person and it was further seen that I cannot understand what it is to be a person except by understanding myself as one of a plurality of persons. Thus to know oneself as a person, and to know others as persons, is not an esoteric kind of knowledge, but is what is implied in all our thinking and acting, and in particular in such characteristically human activities as moral judgement and action.

This implicit recognition of myself and of others as persons is the basis of the mystics' knowledge of human nature. Just as the characteristics of the vital principle of life in general were interpreted as the characteristics of our knowledge of life, so the mystic's knowledge of the principle of life is to be interpreted not as his privileged access to some occult object of knowledge veiled from ordinary men, but as his fuller, deeper, more comprehensive knowledge of the same object. The "object" in this case can only be human nature, or humanity. But this awareness of human life as pattern, as direction, as creativity is not only the form of our knowing, but is also part of what is known. This is so at least in the case of the mystics, who have a heightened or sharpened awareness of what is present implicitly or explicitly in the knowledge of all men. In their case there is also a further element. They not only know human life as direction and pattern, but know what this telos is, how to interpret this patterned structure. The mystic knows not only that life is a pilgrimage but knows what the proper end of this pilgrimage is for himself and for all men.

It has already been noted that this interpretation of the mystical apprehension of the direction of the vital impetus is not Bergson's own. It is both less than he wishes to say in that his rather ill-defined "vital/..

"vital impetus" is not here taken to be any kind of extra entity or power within or behind life or humanity, and also more than Bergson himself says in that what is said about the recognition of oneself and others as persons is a point that he does not, and in his own organismic terms cannot, work out. These points will be argued more fully in the following chapter in dealing with his interpretation of religion. At present an understanding of Bergson is sought which will be true to his intention, while avoiding the difficulties of a "vitalist" interpretation.

In terms of the parable model, what Bergson is claiming for the mystic is that his personal vision or fable is valid for all men, or rather that his personal vision and some public parable mutually imply one another. He is therefore in explaining his vision and ordering his life in accordance with it, not simply valuing but is making some kind of a truth claim, he is claiming to perceive and report some kind of fact about the world and human nature. According to Bergson what he is specifically claiming to know is that "love" is the "meaning of life". That is, that "love" is what ultimately is desired by all men, and is what will fulfill their hopes and aspirations.

It is important to realise that this is intended as a statement of fact. The mystic does not only feel the emotion of love for all men, not only attributes supreme value to love in the sense that he resolves to love, recommends or prescribes love, but also knows that this is the proper end and meaning of all human life.

To understand how this can be a statement of fact it is helpful to remember Bergson's distinction between an intuition and its expression. Bergson insisted at length in Creative Evolution and the Introduction to Metaphysics on the fact that an intuition is strictly inexpressible in conceptual terms. It may be approached by an image or better by several images/..



images, but can only be grasped "from within". But this does not mean that the object of intuition is any less real or "concrete". The mystic's intuition may be expressed in a variety of ways. It may be a description, e.g. of the Kingdom of heaven or of a "vision of a new society". It may be expressed in imperatives, or, and this Bergson regards as supremely important, in action. But in all these cases what is important is what Bergson calls the "emotion" expressed or implied.

Love in Bergson's usage contains also a cognitive element. The "brotherhood of man", the "kinship of Everyman", is recognized by the mystic, and the objectivity of this recognition, is expressed in the description of his vision. What the use of the word "emotion" makes clear however is that the mystic's prophetic vision is not a prediction. Love is a direction, and the description of the New Jerusalem indicates this direction rather than pointing to a determined end. Its purpose is to express love and to elicit the response of love. This love however is not only affective, but also cognitive and conative. We saw that the recognition of any life was impossible except by a kind of sympathy with it, an intuition in the object of what we immediately feel in ourselves. In the case of human life, we only really know what we are, and one another as persons, when this intellectual sympathy is broadened and deepened into love.

#### IV.1 - Love as the Meaning of Life

The phrase, "meaning of life", has now been used more than once. It is the purpose of this chapter to show how Bergson's examination of morality is best interpreted as a statement about the meaning of life, that "love" is the meaning of life.

Bergson does not himself attempt much definition of "love". He obviously/..

obviously means it to be understood as Christian "agape", but he seems to regard his references to Jesus and to the Christian mystics as sufficient explanation of the concept. It will be argued in the following chapter that Bergson's failure to define love more clearly is connected with his failure to go beyond the biological categories of Creative Evolution in his treatment of morality and religion. It is however in the love demonstrated in the lives of the mystics that we are to find the answer to ultimate questions of meaning and purpose. The universe itself is

"the mere visible and tangible aspect of love, and of the need of love"<sup>465</sup>

and if we ask what is the ultimate end or goal of the current of life which culminates in humanity, Bergson's answer is that

"beings have been called into existence who were destined to love and be loved, since creative energy is to be defined as love."<sup>466</sup>

The theological questions raised by these quotations will be dealt with in the chapter on religion. For the moment we are concerned with the intelligibility of the statement implicit in Bergson's account of morality that love, understood as "agape", is the "meaning of life".

Perhaps the best way of clarifying this idea is to see how love, or the vision of a society founded upon love, satisfies what we may regard as reasonable criteria for the appraisal of any statement about the meaning of life. There are of course no generally accepted criteria of meaning of such statements, though the question is one which is currently receiving some attention,<sup>467</sup> and the criteria put forward here will be to some extent suggested by the very idea which they are designed to test for intelligibility. This is perhaps inevitable, and it may be that progress is best achieved in the examination of such a question by making/..

making explicit the kind of view of "the meaning of life" which suggests the criteria advanced for its appraisal.

It is evident that for any image or fable to be adequate as a representation of the meaning of life it must perform two complementary functions. On the one hand it must select from or order experience in terms of its greater or lesser significance so as to give coherence to what would otherwise be simply a sequence of events, and on the other hand the fable or image must be comprehensive in the sense that some place within it can be found for all the events and experiences of life. These general criteria of coherence and comprehensiveness seem to be basic to any attempt to give sense to statements about the meaning of life, but they must be more clearly analysed to see how they would apply to any image and to that of love or community in particular.

(a) Any symbol or image which is to give meaning to the whole of a life must be coherent and comprehensive in a temporal sense. Though a man's life may have and have had many differing purposes and ends, that which is said to be the "meaning" of his life must be able to weave into a single pattern all the subordinate purposes so as to give direction and unity to the whole of his past life. This perception of pattern is also typically such as to suggest projects or aims for the future. The obvious example here is that of a religious fable, where the whole personal development can be seen in terms of guidance, or in the case of sudden conversion, the most widely divergent ways of life before and after the experience can be seen as part of a single whole. Though there will be selection from the past, of experiences which are more significant than others for the establishment of the fable, selection that is in the interests of coherence, the fable should also be comprehensive in the sense of giving a place to, making sense of, periods otherwise "dead" or meaningless.<sup>468</sup>

(b)/..

(b) But a personal fable or image should also be coherent and comprehensive in another sense, that of dealing adequately with what might be called the breadth as well as the length of life. The fable should be compatible with and even inspire the fullest possible development of the potentialities of the person who holds it or lives by it. Life can be given shape, pattern, purpose at very great cost in terms of the stifling of artistic potentiality, emotional satisfaction, religious or moral aspiration. This is perhaps most true of some forms of religious fable, expressed typically more in maxim than in terms of ideals. Such a religious fable can offer perhaps the clearest and most sharply defined type of account of the meaning of life, but only at the cost of either ignoring or rejecting as evil great areas of human experience. Here again coherence and comprehensiveness are complementary. No one can develop to the full his every potentiality, but there is a difference between the life whose energies are channelled in one direction, whose potentialities are organised in terms of a single motif, and that whose development seems to be checked in all but one direction. There is obviously much room for argument here - how for example is one to appraise the life of the hermit - but the complementary functions of the criteria of coherence and comprehensiveness are clear enough.

(c) The terms used to explicate these criteria up till now have been largely of an aesthetic type. Life is a pattern, is given shape and form. But implicit even in what has been said about comprehensiveness is an appeal to a moral criterion. If any account of the meaning of life is to make sense of all experience it must also be open to moral appraisal. This indeed is the central reference of the phrase "meaning of life" for many. "Meaning" in this interpretation can only be given to life, not discovered. However, whether giving meaning to living is wholly/..



wholly an activity of valuing or not, it is at least that, so that the ideal of coherence and comprehensiveness for what is said to be the meaning of life must explicitly include moral evaluation. The image or fable should not conflict with, and ideally should support and express, the moral decisions and valuations of the person who holds to the image.

(d) Up to this point we have dealt with the meaning of life as if it had only an individual, personal reference. This is how it is most often understood but it is not in this sense that Bergson's "principle of life" can be understood. To translate his terminology adequately into the language of the "meaning of life", we must further extend the categories of coherence and comprehensiveness to include the assertion that what is to count as the meaning of life for one person must in some sense be the meaning of life for all men.

Objections to this extension can be made on the ground that it seems to assume from the outset some kind of metaphysical or theistic ground for the meaning of life. It may well be true that theism and perhaps Christian theism in particular can most easily accommodate this view. The assertion that the meaning of life for one is in some sense the meaning of life for all can however be defended on logical, empirical, and moral grounds without recourse to theism.

The logical grounds are simply those touched on already in the discussion of the recognition of life and of persons. Part of the meaning of recognising myself as a person is recognising others as persons. If then I am in virtue of my personhood to pose the question of the meaning of my life, I must also in so doing pose the question of the meaning of the life of all men. The "must" here is a logical "must". If it makes sense for me to speak of the meaning of my life then ipso facto..



facto it makes sense to speak of the meaning or meanings of the lives of all others. This does not of itself show that the meaning of life must be the same for all men. We must necessarily assume that the question is meaningful for all if meaningful for one, but the answers may be very different.

Though there is thus no logical necessity for the meaning of life to be the same thing for all men, a variety of other considerations point towards this conclusion. As philosophers from Aristotle onwards have remarked, man is essentially a societary being. Everything that can be said to be distinctly and characteristically human, self-consciousness itself indeed, is a function of man's ability to relate himself to and communicate with others. It is the social and cultural institutions of man which make possible life itself and the asking of questions about its meaning. It would seem then that anything which a man could significantly claim to be the meaning of his life must give a central place to his relations with other men. Furthermore, the moral criterion already noted would seem to demand that at the very least the way in which I seek to create or realize the meaning of my life should not conflict with and should even encourage the realization by others of the meaning of theirs. Finally, the sheer weight of the evidence of the poetic and religious symbols and fables which celebrate love and community as the end and meaning of life further suggest that it is the explanation of his situation not as an individual but as a person essentially related to other persons that can best discover to a man the meaning of his life.

(e) But if it is accepted that the meaning of life for one man must be the same as or closely related to the meaning of life for all, this implies further formal specification of what this meaning can be said to/..

to be. This kind of comprehensiveness means that the realization of the meaning of life must be within the capacity of all, or rather, a balance must be struck between the ideal as part of the vision of the meaning of life, its character as aim, and the infinite variety of physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual capacities of persons. There is little point in setting up a heroic ideal so far beyond one's capacities that it could not even inspire an effort towards its realization, and as little point in reducing the ideal to the lowest common denominator of man's capacities. Attention must also be given to the variety of human needs and tastes and abilities. A balance must be struck here between an ideal with specifics too closely and one which is too vague to give any precise direction or purpose to life. We cannot say that the meaning of life is that all men should realize union with God through constant contemplation, nor can we be content with a general recommendation to all to "do their best" at whatever they like to do. "The meaning of life" must value some activities, traits, ends, above others, but not so as to make impossible the continuance of ordinary human life or the realization of its meaning by persons of the widest range of tastes and callings.

(f) One more specification of the meaning of life may be suggested. The typical language of the meaning of life is that of seeing visions, pursuing ideals or worthwhile ends, self-realization and so on. But again a balance must be struck between the future reference of the ideal and the present satisfaction realized. That is, the pursuance of the ideal should involve the pursuer in activities which are worth while in themselves as well as being stages on the way to something else.

There is no need to show in detail how love, agape, the creation of a community of persons based upon mutual love and respect satisfies these/..

these suggested criteria. One crucial objection to the idea of a universal "meaning of life" should however be examined. Bergson has been interpreted as saying that the mystics' insight expresses a fact about the world and about all men. It may be granted that the mystic has his vision about the meaning of his own life, but must not each man in some way create the "meaning of life" for himself? Is it not to impugn man's moral freedom to say that anything, even love or brotherhood, is the meaning of his life, is what he is "made for"?

Now it is true in some sense every man does make the meaning of his own life. This indeed is an essential part of what the mystic reveals as the meaning of life. Life is creation, and the brotherhood of man or its possibility is a creation of the mystic. The meaning of life for all men is not discovered in the sense that an explorer discovers a continent or even in the sense that a biologist or sociologist might "discover" a hitherto unrecognized instinct. The mystic breaks through what is merely habitual or instinctive to a new dimension of personal being. This new dimension is reality, is the discovery of a truth about himself and about all men - but it is also his creation in that it goes beyond what is "naturally" possible for men. Bergson's mystic is the paradigm case of "knowing the meaning of life". In knowing himself, in the sense of knowing the aim and meaning of his life, he knows the aim, telos, meaning of all human life. These objects of knowledge are not separable. We have seen that it is the character of the knowledge of life that it recognizes or intuitively knows the characteristics of its own life or duration. In the mystic this implicit knowledge is raised to full consciousness. We can read off, as it were, from his knowing the characteristics of "perfect" knowing, i.e. that in it affection, desire, aspiration and will are fused in a single focus. But/..

But this knowing reflects the structure of what is known, so that the mystic is not only the exemplar of knowing the meaning of life, but is also in himself the symbol of the meaning of life. In his knowledge of man and his love for man he incarnates that direction of life by which alone it is to be defined.

Thus for both formal and material reasons there is no threat to the freedom or creativity of man in the statement that the mystic knows and reveals the meaning of life for all men. Formally, as we have already noted, the mystic's vision does not predict the "end" for humanity or for the individual. His descriptive vision has the function of a sign-post, an indication of direction, rather than that of a sketch of the destination. This direction and destination are to be discovered after him by each man for himself. Materially also, the content of the meaning of life as love precludes any interpretation of man as merely an instrument of life's purpose. Love is not a purpose of which a man can be an instrument, but only an agent. The meaning of life in this sense does not curb the essential creativity of man, since for love to be realized, or the community of love to come into being, it must be freely created.

This outline of an interpretation of the principle of life or the meaning of life as love still leaves open many questions. It has been attempted however before consideration is given to Bergson's treatment of religion in order to make the point, which will be substantiated later, that his account of religion introduces no essentially new elements. Some of Bergson's Roman Catholic expositors in particular have treated his interpretation of Christian mysticism as if he were there appealing to some new category of revelation. We hope to show on the contrary that Bergson's is essentially a "natural" theology, that his/..

his treatment of religion is to be interpreted primarily as showing what man is, and what kind of knowledge of himself and of God he can have.



## CHAPTER V

### THE INTERPRETATION OF RELIGION

Bergson's discussion of religion follows the pattern established in his investigation of ethics. This is true not only of the broad distinction drawn between static and dynamic religion, which corresponds to the distinction between closed and open morality, but also of his method of approach. Religion is considered first of all as a social phenomenon, in terms of the structures, both sociological and intellectual, to which it gives rise, and it is suggested that the interpretation of the meaning of religion is to be sought first in social terms. In the first four sections of this chapter, Bergson's views on "static" and "dynamic" religion will be separately expounded and criticized, and a final section will attempt to appraise the value of this distinction and of his treatment of religion in general.

#### I.1 - The Social Roots of Religion

Basic to his approach is the assumption, which Bergson states on the first page of his first chapter on religion, that

"there has never been a society without religion".<sup>469</sup>

This view has been amply confirmed by anthropological research in the modern period. It is now generally accepted that

"religion is as much a human universal as language or an incest taboo, which is to say a kinship system. Any conception of a 'natural man' who is not encumbered with such 'cultural baggage' belongs to a fictional period of prehistory, for which there is no solid evidence for the human socially organised stage."<sup>470</sup>

Bergson immediately goes on to deny certain theories offered in explanation of/..

of this universal character of religion, notably those of Lévy-Bruhl and of Durkheim, according to which religious beliefs and practices are a product of a primitive or "pre-logical" stage of human intellectual development, (Lévy-Bruhl), or a "collective mind" which has "its own mode of thinking" peculiar to it, (Durkheim)<sup>471</sup>

The reasons for Bergson's rejection of these explanations will become plain in the exposition of his own views, at the moment it is enough to say that for him they are at best only partial answers which do not account for, and indeed even obscure, the real terms of the problem of religion. This problem is constituted by on the one hand the universality of the phenomenon of religion and its uniqueness to human society, and on the other by the fantastic variety of its expression in belief and practice. How is it in particular that

"absurd superstitions have been and are able to control the lives of reasonable beings?"<sup>472</sup>

The attribution of the genesis of religion to primitive or pre-logical mentality does not explain its persistence, and though Bergson agrees that religious beliefs may often be termed "collective representations", the postulate of a "collective mind" offers no adequate explanation of how the product of this mind can conflict with or disconcert the individual mind.

"Though we may persist in speaking of primitive mentality, the problem none the less bears on the psychology of the man of today, .... though we may persist in speaking of collective representations, the question none the less concerns the psychology of the individual man."<sup>473</sup>

If it is true that religion is a phenomenon at once universal and unique in human society - there being no human society without religion and no trace of anything that could properly be called religion or superstition/..

superstition in non-human societies - then in Bergson's view the question can only be approached in biological or evolutionary terms, i.e. by asking what vital need is served by religion.

This question can only be answered by taking account of what Bergson regards as the two essential characteristics of humanity, namely, intelligence and sociability. It is in the interaction of these two capacities that religion arises. Bergson here recapitulates the familiar argument of Creative Evolution on the divergent paths which life has followed to produce as "terminal points" the instinctive society of the hive or ant-hill on the one hand and the intelligent society of human beings on the other. In the field of morality this argument suggested the interpretation of social morality as a "virtual instinct",<sup>474</sup> a pressure which ensures the conformity of the individual's action with what is socially desirable. The same thing is true in the field of social or "static" religion, with this difference, that whereas moral obligation is experienced for the most part simply as pressure or habit, a "must because you must", in religion there are symbols, stories, myths, which are called upon to counteract the threat to social cohesion which arises from the existence of intelligence itself. Intelligence in man brings with it human liberty, individual initiative and independence. As was noted in the discussion of social morality, it may frequently be in the interest of the individual to work against the interests of society, so that if society is to be maintained,

"there must be a counterpoise .... to intelligence. If this counterpoise cannot be instinct itself, for the very reason that its place has been taken by intelligence, the same effect must be produced by a virtuality of instinct, or, if you prefer it, by the residue of instinct which survives on the fringe of intelligence: it cannot exercise direct action, but, since intelligence works on representations, it will call up "imaginary"/..

'imaginary' ones, which will hold their own against the representation of reality and will succeed, through the agency of intelligence itself, in counter-acting the work of intelligence."<sup>475</sup>

It is thus to the faculty of imagination that we must look for an explanation of the various representations which constitute the intellectual or symbolic content of "static" religion. This does not mean that Bergson is dismissing all such representations as "merely imaginary", the point he is concerned to insist upon is that religion and the capacity he calls the myth-making function are only to be understood by being set first in the context of the human social life in which they arise. Myth-making is in man a "virtual instinct",<sup>476</sup> religion is not to be regarded first of all as a system of ideas,

"before man can philosophize man must live",<sup>477</sup>

and so myth and religion are to be approached first in terms of their whole function. The first function which Bergson has pointed to is that of social preservation. Where intelligence would counsel egoism as a maxim for the individual behaviour, imagination conjures up some deity to forbid, threaten or punish.

"Looked at from this first point of view, religion is then a defensive reaction of nature against the dissolvent power of intelligence."<sup>478</sup>

It is

"a precaution against the danger man runs, as soon as he thinks at all, of thinking of himself alone."<sup>479</sup>

Social cohesion in this direct sense is only one of the basic functions Bergson attributes to religion. The second function he distinguishes also has a social role, but indirectly, through supporting and stimulating individual activities. This second function is that of opposing to the idea/..

idea of inevitable death the image of a continuation of life after death. Only man, in virtue of his intelligence, is capable of knowing that he must die. But this foreknowledge of the inevitability of death constitutes a threat to life itself. It is a depressing knowledge, which might tend to stifle or stultify the constant effort and initiative which life itself demands.

"Nature, in such circumstances, has no other resource than to set up intelligence against intelligence. The intellectual representation which thus restores the balance to nature's advantage is of a religious order . . . . Looked at from this second standpoint, religion is a defensive reaction of nature against the representation, by intelligence, of the inevitability of death."<sup>480</sup>

The maintenance of social cohesion and the warding off of the depressing realisation of the inevitability of death are two essential functions of religion. Related to these, but going beyond them in its scope, is a third function, or rather a third explanation of the nature of religious "representations". This also is grounded in the application to life of intelligence.

The ability to plan, to co-ordinate means to a relatively remote end, is part of what is meant by intelligence. But this very ability exposes the intelligent being to a consciousness of risk, to the experience of failure and therefore the consciousness of the possibility of failure. It is from this consciousness of risk, the sense of the precariousness of human existence and effort - arrows miss their mark, crops fail, relatives die - that there arise the images or representations of friendly or unfriendly powers which assist or thwart human efforts by a kind of mystical causality. These images or myths are

"defensive reactions of nature against the representation, by the/..



the intelligence, of a depressing margin of the unexpected between the initiative taken and the effect desired."<sup>481</sup>

There are thus aroused in intelligence itself images and ideas which are a defence against the discouragement created by the operation of intelligence. It is this reaction which is at the root of that seeing of intentions in nature, that personalizing or partial personalizing of natural forces, which allows man through magic and religion to regain confidence, "attachment to life".<sup>482</sup> For religion is not a product of fear,

"belief means essentially confidence, the original source is not fear, but an assurance against fear."<sup>483</sup>

Bergson does not of course imagine that the gods and spirits of mythology or the beliefs and practices of any primitive people sprang ready-made into existence. In his chapter on static religion he goes on to discuss the development of the belief in spirits from the idea or the primitive intuition of intentions inherent in things.

There is no particular interest however in Bergson's account of the development. He had himself no first-hand experience of primitive society and religion, and even some of those on whose work he drew - his friend Lévy-Bruhl for example - were themselves "armchair theorists", so that even though he avoids some of the dogmatism of those whose work he relied on, the real interest of his work on religion lies in his account of its origins rather than its development. Myth-making is a "quasi-instinct", and part of the meaning of the qualification "quasi" here would seem to be that the imaginative intelligence of man is fertile. Myths, religious representations may proliferate, may indeed seem "a farrago of error and folly", but since the social and individual functions of religion are essential for survival, we need not be surprised at the universality/..

universality of religion. Each distinct god or spirit may be "contingent", but the gods as a whole, godhead in general, is necessary.

"The truth is that religion, being co-extensive with our species, must be an effect of our structure."<sup>484</sup>

We shall return in critical discussion to the question of what bearing this explanation of religion in more or less causal terms has on the truth claims of religion, since though the discussion of static religion is largely based on primitive religion and ancient mythology, Bergson regards all religions as being at least in part "static", but in this expository section it will be sufficient to note the points explicitly made by Bergson about the content of religious belief and its place in human life.

Bergson remarks on the lack of concern with which the ancients accepted the addition of new gods to their pantheon, and the fact that such "new" deities were worshipped and "believed in" like the others. This phenomenon is instructive as to the nature of belief in primitive or "static" religion. It is difficult for a Western mind, formed not only by Western science but more importantly by the Judaeo-Christian monotheistic traditions, to grasp how this is possible, and indeed for the ancients themselves it

"would be incredible, if we supposed that the existence of their gods was of the same nature to them as the objects they saw and touched. It was real, but with a reality that yet hinged in some degree on the human will."<sup>485</sup>

The degree to which belief hinges on the human will has already been indicated in referring to the existence of any one god, or the truth of any one magico-religious belief, as "contingent", while belief in godhead in general is psychologically and socially "necessary". It is not important/..

important to discuss to what degree this distinction is true of, or even possible in, all forms of primitive religion. Here Bergson's main point is one that he returns to repeatedly, viz., that religion is not primarily a system of ideas, not first of all a kind of knowledge. This indeed is largely what is meant by his insistence that religion is "an effect of our structure". Mythology is not a kind of history.

"History is knowledge, religion is mainly action: it only concerns knowledge .... in so far as an intellectual representation is needed to ward off the dangers of a certain intellectuality. To consider this representation apart, to criticize it as a representation, would be to forget that it forms an amalgam with the accompanying action. We commit just such an error when we ask ourselves how it is that great minds can have accepted the tissue of childish imaginings, nay, absurdities, which made up their religion. The movements of a swimmer would appear just as silly and ridiculous to anyone forgetting that the water is there, that this water sustains the swimmer, and that the man's movements, the resistance of the liquid, the current of the river, must all be taken together as an undivided whole."<sup>486</sup>

The typically Bergsonian image of the swimmer is a clue to the positive point that is made about the content of religious belief. This is brought out clearly in Bergson's discussion of Lévy-Bruhl. Though he acknowledges his debt to his old friend, he takes issue with him on the interpretation of magico-religious beliefs and practices. As is well known, both in his best-known work, La Mentalité Primitive,<sup>487</sup> and in his other writings, Lévy-Bruhl sharply contrasted the mental processes of "civilized" with those of "primitive" man, particularly with regard to their understanding of causality. According to him, primitive man frequently exhibits a total indifference to proximate or physical causes in seeking the explanation of certain events, particularly in cases of illness/..

illness, accident, or death. Even where the immediate physical causes of an illness or a crop failure are evident, primitive man will persist in seeking the cause in terms of a spell, the influence of an evil spirit, or of some other occult force or "mystic cause", to use Lévy-Bruhl's term. This is evidence of their "pre-logical" mentality.

Not it is true that Lévy-Bruhl was heavily criticized from the beginning. E. Evans-Pritchard, a sympathetic critic, remarks that it is now

"unanimously agreed among anthropologists (that Lévy-Bruhl) made primitive peoples far more superstitious, to use a commoner word than pre-logical, than they really are; and he made the contrast more glaring between their mentality and ours by presenting us as more positivistic than most of us are."<sup>488</sup>

Bergson contends however that Lévy-Bruhl has missed the point of his evidence for "pre-logical" mentality. Reviewing Lévy-Bruhl's own examples, he says,

"one point strikes us at once namely, that in all the cases instanced, the effect reported, which is attributed by primitive man to an occult cause, is an event concerning man, more particularly an accident to a man, more specifically still a man's death or illness."<sup>489</sup>

Primitive man is in fact perfectly capable of acting with confidence in natural laws, and does so in his daily activities. This is the substance of much of the criticism levelled by field-workers at Lévy-Bruhl. But Bergson recognizes that there is a problem, the nature of which is indicated by his remark that "mystic" causality is seen or believed to operate in cases where the life or vital interest of man is concerned. If for instance we take the case of a man killed by a fragment of rock dislodged/..

dislodged during a gale, primitive man is perfectly aware of the necessary physical causes or conditions of this event - the rock already broken, the force of the wind, the weight which broke the skull - but

"what he explains here by a 'supernatural' cause is not the physical effect, it is its human significance, is its importance to man, and more especially to a particular man, the one who was crushed by the stone."<sup>490</sup>

There is nothing, says Bergson, pre-logical or illogical in a belief that a cause should be proportionate to its effect. Even though primitive man recognizes the physical causes of the event, there yet remains something else to be explained which cannot be accounted for in terms which are purely physical, which take no account of humanity. This something else is the momentous fact of the death of a man.

Bergson goes on to point out that it is not only primitive man who feels that an explanation must take account of the human significance of at least certain events. The notions of chance, of luck, whether good or bad, seem for very many people to be regarded as a kind of mystic cause. This is true not only for those whom we call superstitious, and who might therefore be assimilated to "primitive" man at least in this respect. Bergson further observes that "chance", "luck", whether "believed in" in a superstitious manner or not, still plays a role in what might now be called a language-game very similar to that of Lévy-Bruhl's mystic causes. Consider a tile falling from a roof onto the head of a passer-by. We say it happened "by chance". Should we say the same if it had merely crashed to the ground? This would surely be a rather odd use of language unless we had a particular interest in the spot where the tile fell. Bergson is making two points here. The first, of doubtful value and considerably less importance, is a methodological one. He regards it as possible and legitimate to seek by introspection/..



introspection for the "primitive mind" that persists in all of us. If we examine the examples he gives - like that of the falling tile - we can see that at least at an unreflective level, we speak of chance as though it were intentional. We cannot grasp this intentional element on reflection, it is elusive, but the evidence for this unreflective way of regarding certain events is there in our use of the word "chance" itself. Chance is "an intention emptied of its content",<sup>491</sup> and it is possible by "thinking away" all our scientific knowledge and attitudes to recover if only fleetingly this primitive attitude of "natural man".

The second point however is the important one. As the study of Lévy-Bruhl's examples of pre-logical mentality and also the discussion of chance have shown, mystic causes are appealed to in cases where the event to be explained has a certain human significance. It is to take account of this human significance, and not to act as a secondary or substitute causality, that these mystic causes are called in. What this means for religion as a whole is that religious beliefs and practices are not to be explained except in terms of the context in which they occur. Bergson indicates this context in different ways. When he is speaking of the human race as a whole, in terms of the whole evolutionary process, he speaks of religion as serving a vital need, and of the myth-making function as a quasi-instinct. As we have seen however, when he is discussing a particular belief or practice, he speaks of the necessity to understand it in terms of its human significance, that is, as expressing or attributing a specifically human value to life or to some particular aspect of it. How far "value" and human "significance" can be accounted for by analogy with instinct is a question to which we shall return in the critical discussion, for the moment it should be remembered however that Bergson is here discussing static religion only./..

only. A purely "static" religion is possibly not to be found in any human society, but following his usual method of analysis by sharp contrast, Bergson has made the distinction between static and dynamic religion in the interests of the understanding of religion as a whole.

The main points of Bergson's treatment of static religion can now be summed up.

- (a) Religion, as a uniquely and universally human phenomenon, is first of all to be understood as serving some vital human need.
- (b) The vital need served by religion is the maintenance of social cohesion and the encouragement of individual initiative and confidence. Without religion these would be undermined by the action of human intelligence, which is able to recognize uncertainty and death.
- (c) The making of religious representations, the fabrication of doctrine and beliefs is to be understood on the analogy of instinct. It is a reaction of the imaginative intelligence against the threat to human life itself implicit in the exercise of intelligence.
- (d) Religion then is not to be understood by approaching its ideas first as having a speculative epistemological import. Religion is to be understood in terms of the action which it supports and makes possible, in terms of the whole form of life of which it is a part. Only in this way can the point of its beliefs and practices, i.e. their human significance, be grasped.

## II.1 - The Significance of Static Religion

As was noted above, though Bergson's discussion of static religion is/..

is set in evolutionary terms, the real interest of his work is not primarily in any contribution to the understanding of the development of religious ideas but rather in his work on the conceptual analysis of religion. It is worth noting, however, that though Bergson can hardly be said to have contributed much historically to sociology, some of the leading ideas of Morality and Religion seem to be anticipations or parallels of later theoretical developments.

Bergson made little use of footnotes or other references, and it is not always easy to determine what he had read and used. Certain influences are obvious and acknowledged however in Morality and Religion. His sociological reading most probably began with Spencer, his early mentor, and he read Frazer, Westermarck and van Gennep at least,<sup>492</sup> as well as much of the source material on which early studies in the origin of religion were based. The greatest influence however, which Bergson explicitly acknowledges, is that of Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl, with others of the French school.<sup>493</sup> Bergson's idea that intelligence is primarily concerned with actions rather than knowledge is confirmed in the field of religion by Durkheim, who is if anything even more insistent that

"the real function of religion is not to make us think, to enrich our knowledge, .... but rather it is to make us act, to aid us to live."<sup>494</sup>

Bergson accepted and used Durkheim's fundamental insight into the social function of religion and the symbolic character of sacred objects and entities without restricting the meaning of religion to this social function or identifying the referent of the symbols with society itself. It is the rigidity of Durkheim's rules of method, with their systematic disregard of psychological or individual considerations, which shut him up to his social interpretation.<sup>495</sup>

There/..

There is a further interesting parallel with Bergson found in the work of Malinowski on magic and religion.<sup>496</sup> There is no evidence that Bergson had read Malinowski,<sup>497</sup> but he shares with him an insight into the human significance of magical and religious rites and beliefs which is a very important one for the theoretical development of sociology of religion, and one which is also philosophically important. Malinowski does more than contribute to the debate which had been going on at least since Frazer's Golden Bough<sup>498</sup> on the relation between magic and religion and science. He goes beyond this in pointing to the functional necessity, a "vital need", in which both magic and religion are ultimately grounded. The human experience, or conditions of existence to which he points are those later indicated by Bergson, the uncertainty inherent in human life and action and the fact of death.

"Both magic and religion arise and function in situations of emotional stress: crises of life, lacunae in important pursuits, death and initiation into tribal mysteries, unhappy love and unsatisfied hate."<sup>499</sup>

We shall return to the question of the philosophical import of this insight, for the moment it is enough to say that Bergson's approach is in harmony with modern sociological study of religion in seeing that

"we have to account for religious facts in terms of the totality of the culture and society in which they are found,"<sup>500</sup>

rather than to fit the facts into any biological, psychological or sociological theory.

Another important feature of Bergson's analysis of religion which may be illustrated by reference to another thinker is his emphasis on the function of religious ideas - or better, religious emotion - in social change. This is to anticipate the exposition and discussion of what/..

what Bergson says about "dynamic religion", but in this brief attempt to "place" Bergson's ideas in terms of current sociology of religion reference must be made to the work of Max Weber.<sup>501</sup>

It does not seem that Bergson was acquainted with Weber's work, and he does not work out the distinction with the same vast erudition, but there is a striking similarity between Bergson's static and dynamic religion and Weber's conception of the structures of rationalization in religion and the role of "charisma" or prophecy in dynamic social change. For Weber as for Bergson the religious situation of a culture is defined by structures - intellectual or institutional - which support, legitimize, give meaning to man's place in the world. His analysis of these structures is infinitely more complex than Bergson attempted, but Weber also sees them as guaranteeing stability, social cohesion and order, by providing systems of meaning or a programme for life as a whole. But Weber's primary interest is in social change, and it is this emphasis, together with his view of the role of the individual "charismatic leader" that most clearly differentiates his position from that of Durkheim and also provides the parallel with Bergson. Talcott Parsons remarks that there are two particularly notable points in Weber's concept of charisma as it relates to the cognitive aspects of the development of religious rationalization.

"The first is the focus on the individual person who takes the responsibility for announcing a break in the established normative order and declaring this break to be morally legitimate, .... the second .... is a crucial non-cognitive aspect of it, namely that of commitment to the break and the order embodied in the break."<sup>502</sup>

As was shown in the discussion of open morality, and as will be seen again in dynamic religion, these points are also characteristic of Bergson's understanding/..



understanding of the work of the mystic. It is the individual mystic alone who breaks through habitual social morality or religion to a higher order. This new morality or religion is not a rule or doctrine but a way of life which is lived as well as preached by the mystic.

These latter points however, will be examined in more detail after the exposition of what is meant by dynamic religion. For the present it is enough to note that many of the ideas adumbrated by Bergson in his treatment of static religion are or have become part of the mainstream of theoretical development in sociology of religion.<sup>503</sup>

Apart however from this placing of Bergson's thought in terms of sociological theory, there are points of real philosophical interest which are raised by his treatment of static religion. These may be noted at this point, though their full significance will only be seen after the examination of dynamic religion, when Bergson's view of religion as a whole will be critically discussed.

The first point is one which Bergson puts most forcefully in a negative sense, in his denial that the primary interest of religious belief is intellectual or speculative. Religion is not first of all a theory about the world, before a man can philosophize he must live. What this means in more positive terms is that religion is to be understood from within, in the context of the "form of life" of which it is a part, to use the Wittgensteinian phrase which is becoming familiar in this connection. Bergson can use language as strong as that of a Tylor or a Spencer to characterize particular manifestations of religion, which have been and often still are "a farrago of error and folly".<sup>504</sup> But he does not dismiss religion in these terms. The fact that given beliefs may appear to an outsider to be crass superstition does not necessarily indicate that they are meaningless. Philosophical enquiry must/..

must first of all take account of what religion means for the believer. Here again Bergson's approach is in line not only with modern studies of primitive religion such as those of Lienhardt<sup>505</sup> and Evans-Pritchard<sup>506</sup> on neighbouring tribes of the Sudan, but also with a view-point in contemporary philosophy of religion exemplified by D.Z. Phillips<sup>507</sup> and P. Winch.<sup>508</sup> Bergson follows earlier theorists in working within an evolutionary or biological framework of thought. Static religion is for him an "effect of our structure", and he is concerned to seek the "vital need" that is served by it, but he is none the less careful not to impose alien criteria of intelligibility on the phenomena studied, like these later thinkers, he is

"primarily interested not in what philosophers and theologians have said about prayer, but in what men are doing when they talk to God."<sup>509</sup>

The reference to contemporary philosophy of religion is instructive for the elucidation of a second point Bergson makes which complements the first. For it is not enough in a philosophical study of religion simply to attempt to understand it in its own terms. Though it may be possible to grasp how an alien culture or religion has its own internal criteria of intelligibility, this raises the new question of how we are to understand the relation between these criteria and our own norms of rationality. The possibility of understanding religious belief or an alien culture and the relation between this understanding and believing is one of the main points at issue in a recent discussion between P. Winch and A. MacIntyre.<sup>510</sup> In the context of a discussion of what would be involved in attempting to understand or see the point of the beliefs and practices of the members of a given society S - which beliefs and practices are perfectly comprehensible to the members of S in terms of their own criteria of intelligibility - Winch remarks that what/..

what we have to do is

"to create a new unity for the concept of intelligibility, having a certain relation to our old one and perhaps requiring a considerable realignment of our categories. We are not seeking a state in which things will appear to us just as they do to members of S, and perhaps such a state is unattainable anyway. But we are seeking a way of looking at things which goes beyond our previous way in that it has in some way taken account of and incorporated the other way that members of S have of looking at things."<sup>511</sup>

This new unity for the concept of intelligibility is only attainable in Winch's view when we are able to consider the relation of our own as well as the other criteria of a rationality to something else. This something else is "a sense of the significance of human life", which Winch thinks

"indispensable to any account of what is involved in understanding and learning from an alien culture."<sup>512</sup>

This is of course very much Bergson's view of the matter. As was noted in his criticism of Lévy-Bruhl, he himself sees the real point of otherwise inexplicable "pre-logical" beliefs in terms of their "human significance". By this Bergson means that it is through religion and magic first that the world becomes man's world, and that man is given significance in the world. The uncertainties of human action, what Bergson calls the gap between initiative taken and result achieved, the recognition of the inevitability of death, the conflict of individual desires with the needs of society, all these are aspects of universal human experience. Bergson does not analyse these experiences in detail, he points out only that they are essentially human experiences inasmuch as they require the exercise of intelligence, and that religion is a quasi-instinctive reaction to them. It is not however the analysis which/..

which is of interest, but rather the suggestion that there is that which can be called universal human experience and that the point of religion is to be found in the way in which it interprets this. The point of religion is the way in which it gives meaning to life.

It is obvious that at this point Bergson's biological schema or analogy breaks down. It is possible perhaps to understand a "will-to-live", a reaction against the awareness of inevitable death, in terms of a "quasi-instinct", even if this reaction is expressed in conceptual or mythical terms, but instinct, or even "quasi-instinct" is a wholly inadequate category to describe the basis of the social or conceptual structures which express man's sense of what is significant in human life. It may be said in Bergson's defence that he is here again using his artificial method of exposition by contrast, that he does not mean to imply that purely static or purely dynamic religion is anywhere actually to be found; any more than purely closed or open morality, but even so, as will be seen again more clearly in the examination of dynamic religion, he does not seem to have developed a vocabulary or conceptual framework which will do justice to the realm of the personal. "Instinct" simply will not do for meanings and values.

The third point of philosophical interest that should be noted is the role Bergson assigns to imagination in the development of religious ideas. We have seen that he first insists that religion should be interpreted as a "form of life", in terms of its function in the life of the believer and his society, and secondly that the clue to this interpretation is to be found in the answers given by religion to the existential questions raised by universal human experience. But religious belief is also prima facie very often a cosmology, a theory of the origins and nature of the world. What status is to be accorded to its account of how/..

how things are? Such theological and cosmological theories are in Bergson's view products of the imagination, of the myth-making function. Gods and spirits are not simply a projection of man's fears - but a reaction against his fears and doubts. This is however a reaction of the intelligence itself, the pagan pantheon is a projection, the result of the work of the intelligence upon the awareness of "semi-personal presences" or "efficient presences" which are the emotional roots of religion.

This does not mean however that the theology and cosmology of static religion can be dismissed as "purely imaginary". It seems to be because of this pejorative sense of the word "imagination" and its derivatives that Bergson prefers the expression "myth-making function", and his apparent debunking of religion is qualified by several considerations. There is first the point already outlined, that religion must be understood in its total context as a "form of life" and not in a purely speculative sense. Secondly, there is Bergson's evolutionary view-point. In one sense, the word "static" is misleading. Through the development and re-interpretation of the myths and symbols of static religion new advance towards a true or more adequate religion can be made. Thirdly, and most importantly, it is not to be assumed that the essence of religion can be expressed in any manner other than by myth and symbol. The myth-making function is essential to the expression of all religious belief, though necessarily only a partial expression of it, though Bergson admits that there is no limit to the possible development of myth and superstition.

All of these points - the necessity of understanding religion from within, its interpretation in terms of its "human significance", and the role of myth and symbol in it - will be discussed again after the examination of what is meant by dynamic religion. It is important however to see/..



see that they arise first from static religion, since Bergson means us to take seriously his insistence firstly that static and dynamic religion are in essence different things, and secondly that in practice we find them inextricably intertwined in the belief and practice of modern "higher" religion.

### III.1 - The Contribution of Mysticism

Bergson begins his exposition of dynamic religion by recalling the main thesis of Creative Evolution, that of a current of creative energy forcing its way through matter, and being split up into myriad streams of life as it does so. Of the two of these streams which progressed farthest, one, as we have seen, turned in upon itself, lapsing into the "somnambulism of instinct,"<sup>513</sup> and only the other, that which culminates in man, was successful in attaining fully conscious intelligence and therefore liberating invention or creativity. But the powers of reflexion and intelligence necessary to invention are not without their dangers, and in the context of the development of life, static religion is that reaction of intelligence itself which makes good any deficiency of "attachment to life" implicit in the exercise of reason. It is in this context also that Bergson first sets out what is meant by dynamic religion. Static religion

"attaches man to life, and consequently the individual to society, by telling him tales on a par with those with which we lull children to sleep."<sup>514</sup>

But there could be another solution to the problem of the undermining of confidence by intelligence, namely that of turning back for fresh impetus to the source of life itself. This intuitive grasp of the principle of life, the vital impetus, is the mystical experience, which gives/..

gives joy, love and a confidence which goes far beyond the reassurance offered by static religion.

Bergson thus rather uncharacteristically announces his definition of mystical or dynamic religion in terms of the vital impetus before he has even begun the examination of the phenomena of mysticism. In keeping with this a priori definition, his somewhat perfunctory account of mysticism is given from an openly evolutionary point of view, in that Greek and Oriental mysticism are regarded from the beginning as tentative efforts, unsuccessful attempts at the "complete" mysticism which only made its appearance with Christianity. This he admits is an a posteriori historical judgement.

"As a matter of fact, it is we who convert them into attempts by an act of retrospection. They were, when they occurred, complete and self-sufficient actions, and they have only assumed the guise of initial preparatory efforts since the day when ultimate success transferred them into partial failures, by virtue of the mysterious power which the present exerts over the past. They will none the less serve us to mark the intervening stages, to analyse into its virtual elements the indivisible act by which dynamic religion is posited, and at the same time to show, by the manifest unity of direction of all these efforts, which now prove to have been unsuccessful, that the sudden leap which marked final achievement was in no way fortuitous."<sup>515</sup>

These tentative efforts are attempts of mysticism to take root in static religion preparatory to supplanting it. Mysticism has a cultural context, its insights are translated into religious ritual and practice or into philosophical concepts, and these concepts and practices in turn will prompt some privileged soul to go beyond them in search of a vision or immediate apprehension of transcendental reality. Bergson regards Alexandrine mysticism, the philosophy of Plotinus in particular, as being the culmination of the development of Greek thought. From this point of view/..

view he is able to regard the whole development as a kind of dialectical movement between reflective philosophy and certain elements of Greek religion. Greek philosophy may certainly be regarded as a purely rational development, but

"two points should be noted. The first is that at the origin of this great movement there was an impulsion or shock which was not of a philosophic nature. The second is that the doctrine in which the movement culminated, and which brought Greek thought to a climax, claimed to transcend pure reason. There is no doubt that the Dionysiac frenzy was continued into Orphism, and that Orphism went on into Pythagoreanism: well, it is to this latter, perhaps even to the former, that the primary inspiration of Platonism goes back. We know in what an atmosphere of mystery, in the Orphic sense of the word, the Platonic myths were wrapped, and how the theory of ideas itself was inclined, by a covert sense of affinity, towards the Pythagorean theory of numbers. True, no influence of this kind is noticeable on Aristotle and his immediate successors, but the philosophy of Plotinus, in which the development culminates, and which owes as much to Aristotle as to Plato, is unquestionably mystic. If it has undergone the influence of Eastern thought, so very much alive in the Alexandrine world, this occurred without the knowledge of Plotinus himself, who thought he was merely condensing all Greek philosophy, with the object of opposing it to foreign doctrines. Thus, to sum up, there was in the beginning a leaven of Orphism, and at the end a metamorphosis of dialectics into mysticism."<sup>516</sup>

But this was not "complete" mysticism. Bergson admits that his definition of complete mysticism, with reference to which he appraises reports of mystical experience, is somewhat arbitrary.

"One may give words whatever connotation one likes, provided one begins by defining that meaning. In our eyes, the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort/..

effort of which life is the manifestation. This effort is of God, if not God himself. The great mystic is to be conceived as an individual being, capable of transcending the limitations imposed on the species by its material nature, thus continuing and extending the divine action. Such is our definition."<sup>517</sup>

By this standard, Plotinus falls short of "complete" mysticism. He reached the stage of ecstasy, where the soul feels imbued or irradiated with the presence of God himself, but he did not reach what Bergson regards as the stage beyond that of vision, where contemplation is carried over into action, where the human will becomes one with and the instrument of the divine will. Plotinus himself makes this clear, though in words which show his disagreement with Bergson's view of "complete" mysticism.

"Action is a weakening of contemplation".<sup>518</sup>

Greek mysticism then is intellectualistic, its ideal, at any rate as expressed in Plotinus, falls short of the unitive life which is one with the divine life in action.

It is not important for the present study to criticize Bergson's view of the history of Greek philosophy, and it will be better to go on to his account of Oriental and Christian mysticism before attempting a summary of what he regards as mysticism's essential elements.

Bergson's examination of Eastern mysticism is even more cursory than his account of the Greeks. He notes the primitive practice of the use of intoxicating liquor to produce divine rapture, and the physical practices which later became systematized in yoga. The ecstatic or hypnotic states produced in these ways, like Dionysiac frenzies, are not essential to but may be regarded as heralding or suggesting the mysticism which was to come.

It/..

It was possible in the case of the Greek thought to interpret the relation of philosophy to religion, though their development was largely separate. In the East however, and here Bergson refers specifically to India, no such interpretative effort is necessary: Hindu thought is both a philosophy and a religion. But because of this close connection between philosophical speculation and religion, Indian philosophy never became, as did Greek science, a knowledge susceptible of unlimited development. This is because for the Hindu

"knowledge was always a means rather than an end. The problem for him was to escape from life, which he felt to be unremitting cruelty."<sup>519</sup>

The recurrent theme then of Indian philosophy as of religion is that of the search for deliverance, and this deliverance is to be found, according to Indian religion - Buddhism in particular - in the renunciation of desire. But what is aimed at is not simply an intellectual conviction. Even before Buddhism this conviction was held to be in the nature of a vision, passed on by him who had seen. Buddhism, though more philosophical than earlier teaching, is also more mystical.

"The state towards which it guides the soul is beyond joy and pain, beyond consciousness .... the origin of the Buddha's mission lies in the illumination that came to him in his early youth. Everything in Buddhism which can be put into words can doubtless be considered as a philosophy; but the essential is the final revelation, transcending both reason and speech. It is the conviction, gradually neared and suddenly attained, that the goal is reached: man's sufferings, the only certainty, and consequently the only living thing in life, are over."<sup>520</sup>

This conviction, or rather the ecstatic experience which brings this conviction, also falls short of Bergson's complete mysticism. He concedes/..



concedes that Buddhism does in fact enjoin charity, love of all men. But this precept in Buddhism lacks "warmth and glow".<sup>521</sup> There is in classical Buddhism no real faith in the efficacy of human action. This enthusiastic charity, comparable to Christian mysticism, is found only in modern times in the life and work of such as Ramakrishna or Vivekananda. This is due Bergson thinks not so much to any direct dogmatic influence of Christianity in India, but rather to the hope or confidence in human action which is implicit in Western industrial civilisation. The principal origin of Hindu pessimism lay in the sheer hopelessness of man's struggle with a Nature apparently bent on crushing him through famine and disease. The advent of new industrial and economic techniques, new forms of social and political organisation, made feasible the hope of a new kind of deliverance, and liberated the active mysticism of the moderns. Bergson seems to regard a faith in the efficacy of love's action as a pre-requisite of love, at least in the sense of the universal active love which is complete mysticism.

This fullest realisation of the mystical impulse is found in the Christian mystics. Bergson makes this judgement not on dogmatic grounds but because the great Christian mystics have been pre-eminently activist. Even mystics of the contemplative type, whether Christian or not, have attempted to pass on something of their vision through teaching, but it is in the case of such as St. Paul, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis and Joan of Arc that we see supremely exemplified the vitality, energy, intellectual vigour which characterizes complete mysticism. The ecstatic experiences reported by these mystics Bergson regards as unimportant.

"Such indeed has been the opinion of the great mystics themselves. They have been the first to warn their disciples against visions which were quite likely to be pure hallucinations. And they generally/..

regarded their own visions, when they had any, as of secondary importance, as wayside incidents; they had had to go beyond them, leaving raptures and ecstasies far behind, to reach the goal, which was identification of the human will with the divine will."<sup>522</sup>

This identification of the human will with the divine is the final stage however. The Christian mystic also knows first the experience of joy, light, union with God. But in great mysticism even this rapture is shadowed by a kind of anxiety, which presages the stages still to come. This anxiety shows that union with God is not yet completely realised. Complete union is more than awareness, but is union also in will and action. Bergson explains the experience of the "dark night of the soul" as being due to the fading of ecstasy, a return of self-awareness to the mystic, which precedes that complete union with God in which the mystic is a divine instrument. The soul of the mystic

"had sensed the presence of God, it had thought it beheld God in a symbolic union, it had even been united to Him in its ecstasy; but none of this rapture was lasting, because it was mere contemplation; action threw the soul back on itself and thus divorced it from God. Now it is God who is acting through the soul, in the soul; the union is total, therefore final."<sup>523</sup>

The mystic is now fully free, and yet is "possessed". His freedom, his boundless energy, his simplicity and directness of vision and powers of endurance and decision come from the coincidence of his will with the source of life itself.

As was noted, the mystical experience does not simply arise in a cultural vacuum. The Christian mystic is already familiar with the theology, symbols and images of Christianity, as are also for the most part his disciples or followers, so that it is natural that his teaching will/..

will correspond to the beliefs he shares with his followers, even though it is not based on those abstract beliefs. Bergson insists however that mysticism is not and cannot be merely enthusiasm, religious belief to which is added an unusual degree of emotional ardour. Mysticism is an original vision or revelation. Doctrine by itself cannot give birth to the illumination and ardour of dynamic religion, though dynamic religion itself can be, indeed must be since not all men are capable of the mystical vision, translated into doctrine and concept. In a striking phrase Bergson remarks that religion is the

"crystallization brought about by a scientific process of cooling, of what mysticism had poured, while hot, into the soul of man."<sup>524</sup>

But this is only to insist on the originality and uniqueness of the vision or revelation of each mystic. It is also true that

"mysticism and religion are mutually cause and effect",<sup>525</sup>

although where mysticism is the effect religion is not a sufficient cause. This interaction of religion and mysticism is seen in the case of Christianity. On the one hand, Christianity and even Christ himself can be seen as a continuation of the work of the Hebrew prophets. It is the dynamic active element in the prophetic teaching which has contributed most to the complete or active mysticism of Christianity. But none the less Christianity is a radical transformation of Judaism. A national religion in Christ became universal, a God whose justice and power were shown in the history of his own people became a God of love who loved all mankind. This breakthrough is due to Christ, who is for Bergson the supreme mystic. Christ is mentioned on only one page of the chapter on dynamic religion, and Bergson refuses to make any dogmatic pronouncement.

"From/..

"From our standpoint, which shows us the divinity of all men, it matters little whether or not Christ be called a man",

even the facts of his historical existence are of secondary importance, what matters is that there must have been an author of the recorded teaching of Christ. This person, whatever his name, is the supreme example of that union with God which Bergson calls complete mysticism. The Christian mystics themselves are but the

"imitators, and original but incomplete continuators, of what the Christ of the Gospels was in all his glory."<sup>526</sup>

One more point should be noted before the attempt is made to sum up the characteristics of mysticism or dynamic religion. The content or meaning of mystical experience is simply this, that God is love and the object of love. Bergson remarks of the mystic's love of humanity that it is "more metaphysical than moral in its essence",<sup>527</sup> and this is true also of all that Bergson says about the love of God. The mystic's love is in fact no more than his identification with the love of God. It is well then in interpreting what is meant by love, the love of God in particular, to remember the root and the history of Bergson's concept. It was noted that Bergson begins by defining mysticism in terms of its relation to the vital impetus, and it is obvious that what he found in mystical experience was a confirmation of the existence of the vital impetus of Creative Evolution, and that "love" and "God" are in the first instance new names and perhaps new characterisations of this impetus.<sup>528</sup> Already in Creative Evolution consciousness, or supra-consciousness was said to be at the origin of life,<sup>529</sup> a consciousness which is a need of creation.<sup>530</sup> There was also thus early the hint that in the mystery of love was to be found the secret of life,<sup>531</sup> and in an essay of 1911 the creative genius of saints and heroes is seen as revealing metaphysical/..

metaphysical truth.<sup>532</sup> In Morality and Religion this vital impetus breaks through to consciousness, making itself known in and to certain privileged souls, the mystics. In the definition of mysticism quoted earlier, Bergson says the creative effort which the mystic apprehends and enters into - which is the vital impetus - is "of God, if not God himself".<sup>533</sup> Elsewhere in the same chapter he is less cautious. The creative energy is "defined as love",<sup>534</sup> and the divine love in turn is known by the mystic to be "not a thing of God, but God himself".<sup>535</sup> In complete mysticism the mystic identifies himself with this creative love, not only in the momentary experience of ecstatic union, but in thought and will and action. This is possible in virtue of something that comes to be known in the mystical experience itself, namely that humanity, consciousness, is already part of this creative effort. Humanity indeed is not only an expression of the creative effort but is its intention or goal, for the universe is seen by the mystic to be the

"visible and tangible aspect of love, together with all the consequences entailed by this creative emotion: I mean the appearance of living creatures in which this emotion finds its complement; of an infinity of other beings without which they could not have appeared, and lastly of the unfathomable depths of material substance without which life would not have been possible."<sup>536</sup>

But the onward surge of the divine creative energy has not come to a halt in humanity as it is. If the divine love finds its complement in man, this is true in virtue of the fact that men also are creators. This is the intention of Nature, or what comes to the same thing, the purpose of God, which is apprehended by the mystic. "Creation is God undertaking to create creators."<sup>537</sup> Mystical experience, though rare and confined to privileged souls, is in principle available to all men. The mystic, by his absorption in the love of God and his self-identification/..



identification with the love of God for humanity continues the divine action and carries forward the purpose of God towards its ultimate goal, which is to

"complete the creation of the human species and make of humanity what it would have straight away become, had it been able to assume its final shape without the assistance of man himself."<sup>538</sup>

Bergson's exposition of what he means by "love" is anything but systematic, but what he has to say may be set out briefly as follows.

(a) The vital impetus, principle and agent of all life and creation, is more fully known as God who is love.

(b) This is because the creative energy which is the principle of life comes to consciousness in man. In animal and vegetable life, where genera and species are so many "stops" or eddies in the current of life, there was none the less continued creation at the level of species through the appearance of new forms. So also in human life there is continued creation, this time at the individual level. Every individual is at least potentially a creator, but it is the mystics, creators par excellence, who break through the crust of convention and habit, static religion and closed morality to an awareness of their union with God who is love and creative energy. This implies also a recognition of their oneness with all humanity, their union with God is as it were for others and not only for themselves.

(c) This awareness Bergson calls an "emotion", though it is beyond feeling and reason while including both. It is expressed, so far as it is expressible, not only in image and symbol but supremely in creative love for all men. It is propagated less by teaching than by the "catching" of the vision and enthusiasm from the one who has seen.

(d)/..

(d) Bergson says the love of God has no object, and in the same paragraph that God needs his creatures, men.<sup>539</sup> This appears to mean first that God's love is not caused by or limited to its object. It is self-sufficient, "qualified by its own essence".<sup>540</sup> But since this love is creative energy, it includes within itself a need to create, and to create creatures worthy of its love. The apparent paradoxes of a need in God and a love without an object complement one another. Love is primarily a direction, creative energy. The creatures who are worthy of God's love are themselves creators. Therefore, though we can say that God loves men, this does not mean that this love is limited to men. Implicit in it, and therefore implicit in the human love which reflects or coincides with the divine love, is the vision of the completion of creation; the realisation of

"the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods."<sup>541</sup>

In the next section of this chapter, Bergson's account of mysticism and its implications for the philosophy of religion will be critically appraised. Before going on to this however, the points which Bergson himself regards as of importance for philosophy should be briefly summarized.

Bergson is offering neither a theology nor simply a phenomenological account of religion but is engaged in a philosophical enquiry. M. Jacques Chevalier records a conversation in which he insists that

"my book is in fact a philosophical work",  
if there is anything original in his work it is that

"I try to introduce mysticism into philosophy as a procedure of philosophical research."<sup>542</sup>

This/..

This procedure Bergson regards as a method of approaching empirically the problem of the nature and existence of God,<sup>543</sup> as indeed the only method of empirical approach.

Bergson takes for granted a broad unanimity or at least a universal core of mystical experience which is not to be accounted for, even within a single religious tradition, in terms of a common theology or acquaintance with a mystical tradition.<sup>544</sup> He seems also to regard the question of objective reference as settled when he has dismissed the suggestion that mysticism is a pathological state.<sup>545</sup> The problem of verification is admitted to be a real one, since genuine mystics are rare, but although there may be few who can enter fully into the mystical experience, there are many who can go at least part of the way. Further, the description of a genuine mystical experience seems to authenticate itself to most people. "Something within us echoes the call", in the words of William James.<sup>546</sup>

It is true however that none of this can offer actual proof of the existence of God, or reliable information about Him. But mystical experience does not stand by itself. It is evidence confirming what Bergson believes he has established by following other "lines of facts", particularly in Creative Evolution. The conclusion there was the conception of the vital impetus and of creative evolution. This creative energy is akin to consciousness, so that it can even be said that all life is in reality of a psychological order, since consciousness or supra-consciousness is at the origin of life. This conclusion in Bergson's view makes possible and even probable the existence of a privileged experience such as that of the mystics. This convergence between the argument of Creative Evolution and the evidence of mystical experience is perhaps hardly surprising in view of the fact that, as was noted, Bergson/..

Bergson defines mysticism from the beginning in terms of the vital impetus and interprets mystical experience in terms of his definition. This is not however the part of his argument which is of most philosophical interest. This interest is found rather in his interpretation of the light which the phenomena of mysticism throw throw on the problem of the nature and existence of God.

Leaving aside then for the present the question of the justification of the appeal to mystical experience as a method of empirical research, we are to ask what is revealed about the nature of God by reflection on this kind of experience. Since this is an empirical method, it will not begin with any a priori ideas about the nature of God, as do all of the traditional theologies which are rooted in one way or another in Aristotle. A metaphysical construct like the conception of the Unmoved Mover itself rests on the fundamental Platonic error which Bergson has argued against since his first "discovery" of duration. The relation of Aristotle's God to the world is that of the Platonic idea to things, and consists essentially in giving an ontological primacy to the immutable idea over against the infinitely changing diversity of experience. Ideas are the real, which things in some way approximate to or imitate. But Bergson has shown that this is an illusion of intelligence; the real is the world of duration and change, and ideas are the "cuts" or "snapshots" which intelligence takes of this reality in order to enable us to act in and upon the world. This activity of intelligence is of course social, with its results stored up in language in the form of ideas, so that when we make rest prior to movement, set being above becoming and change, and call the refined quintessence of these ideas "God", what we are doing, says Bergson in a Durkheimian phrase, is to "deify the social".<sup>547</sup> It is not to be wondered at then that there are/..

are difficulties in accounting for the relation of a God conceived in this manner to the world, but such problems are pseudo-problems, and only arise from the conception of a God whom men have never dreamed of invoking.

The mystics ignore such questions as these. Bergson continues his negative argument by instancing other false problems which the example of the mystics should teach us to leave out of consideration. There is the metaphysical question of existence itself, of why there should be a world, anything rather than nothing. Bergson argued in Creative Evolution that this is also a pseudo-problem, since the cogency of the question rests on the assumption that the idea of "nothingness" is meaningful, which Bergson believes it is not. In any case, this is another question which would not occur to the heroes of the faith. Similarly with the traditional doctrine of the omnipotence of God. Here again Bergson would question whether the notion of the totality of the possible implicit in the idea of omnipotence has any real meaning, but even apart from this, he contends that the idea of omnipotence is an a priori representation, and that we simply take it for granted that this is an idea of God. Objections to this idea are not valid arguments against the existence of God. "Omnipotence" in this sense is a purely logical construct, and all that the mystics mean by the word is

"an energy to which no limit can be assigned, and a power of creating and loving which surpasses all imagination."<sup>548</sup>

This rejection of omnipotence in a logical sense occurs in what is Bergson's only explicit reference to the traditional problem of evil. He does not claim thereby to have offered a "solution" to the problem, but the only other point he makes is to remark that in spite of evil

"humanity finds life, on the whole, good, since it clings to it; and/..



and then that there is an unmixed joy, lying beyond pleasure and pain, which is the final state of the mystic soul."<sup>549</sup>

It appears to be this consideration which leads him to give what is no more than an unelaborated suggestion that though suffering may not be willed by God, it may none the less be an integral part of the whole movement which is creative evolution.

It may be doubted whether Bergson's rather short way with these traditional problems is really adequate even in his own terms, and this is a question which will be taken up in the final section, but it should be pointed out that in all this Bergson is not arguing that such problems are solved by the simple appeal to mystical experience. His intention is really a negative one in the first instance, a plea that we should not add to our difficulties by importing ideas into the philosophy of religion which have no grounding in experience. If we follow his advice, we shall then be free to allow the nature of God to

"appear in the very reasons we have for believing in His existence: we shall no longer try to deduce His existence or non-existence from an arbitrary conception of His nature."<sup>550</sup>

The appeal to mysticism is not an appeal to a source of knowledge that is "privileged" in the sense that revelation is privileged. Mystical experience, however rare, is human experience, in principle available to all men. Bergson means his positive contribution to be that of extending the concept of experience to include this, but negatively he is also concerned to warn against the introduction of ideas that have no experiential warrant.

#### IV.1 - Mysticism and Human Life

In this section the account of dynamic religion and its implication for philosophy of religion given in the third chapter of Morality and Religion/. .

Religion will be briefly appraised, before going on in the final section to an examination of Bergson's philosophy of religion as a whole.

Taken by itself, and considered as what it is given out to be, namely, a study in mysticism, Bergson's chapter on dynamic religion is in many ways one of the weakest sections of his whole work. Reference has already been made to the fact that the definition of mysticism is given in terms of the vital impetus of Creative Evolution, and it is obvious that the interpretation of the mystical experience is dictated by this a priori definition. It is true of course that Bergson spent many years in the preparation of Morality and Religion. As early as 1903, in a letter to William James, he is recording the "profound impression" made on him by The Varieties of Religious Experience, which seemed to him to have extracted "the very quintessence of religious emotion", and to have set an example of method wherein James "would be followed by many others".<sup>551</sup> There is abundant evidence that if not at this time, then at least a few years later, following the publication of Creative Evolution, Bergson was already immersed in the study of mysticism and religion,<sup>552</sup> and studies have been made of the extent to which Bergson was influenced by this.<sup>553</sup> Even the most sympathetic commentators agree however that Bergson read and interpreted his sources in his own way, a judgement which might be put more strongly, but not less truthfully, by saying that he used and interpreted that which he found in mystical experience which was consonant with his own views. This point hardly needs to be argued, since Bergson, as was shown in the exposition of his view of mysticism, admits how closely it parallels or continues his earlier work. This unity however must be borne in mind, since it is a major clue to the interpretation of Bergson's philosophy of religion.

It was noted earlier in the discussion of Creative Evolution,<sup>554</sup> how the whole of the evolutionary process is to be understood in terms of its end in human consciousness. This "end" is not itself a halt, the term of evolutionary progress. Creation continues, since the flowering of the vital impetus in human consciousness means that creation has now become conscious, has ended in the creation of creators. To continue the history of the vital impetus, Bergson must therefore examine peculiarly human activities, in particular those which manifest most clearly the creative power of life. It is in this context that the problem of morality and religion set itself, and it is in this context that Bergson's treatment of mysticism and his understanding of the nature of God are to be understood.

Creative Evolution defined God primarily as creator, originator of the creative impulse which comes to consciousness in man. The only empirical method then to expand and clarify this definition of God as creator is to attempt to understand man as creator, which in turn will lead to the consideration of these individuals who are most fully creative. This train of thought is illustrated in an interesting and significant addition which Bergson made to his essay on Life and Consciousness. In the original version, given as a lecture in English in 1911 and published in that year, Bergson remarks that though the triumph or meaning of life is found in creation in every sphere, including those of artistic and scientific endeavour, we ought nevertheless to think

"that the ultimate reason of human life is a creation which, in distinction from that of the artist or man of science, can be pursued at every moment and by all men alike; I mean the creation of self by self, the continual enrichment of personality by elements which it does not draw from outside, but causes to spring forth from itself."<sup>555</sup>

This/..

This lecture was translated into French and published in a revised and expanded version in the volume of essays which appeared in 1919, a book which was itself translated into English as Mind-Energy in the following year. In the revised version Bergson adds a passage to that quoted above, in which he reaffirms and clarifies his assertion that it is in the moral sphere that man reveals himself as most creative; and therefore justifies his looking to the saints and heroes of the moral life for the revelation of the meaning of life itself. If it is the mystics who are most creative, then it is they also who are most fully human.

Bergson makes his point first by a rather curious reference to artistic creation. He seems to regard a work of art, at this point at least, as a kind of self-contained statement, which has within itself no creative power, and the work of the artist as essentially a kind of repetition or reproduction, in however original a form, of this statement.

"The artist's stand-point is therefore important, but not final. .... The standpoint of the moralist is higher. .... it is the moral man who is a creator in the highest degree - the man whose action, itself intense, is also capable of intensifying the action of other men, and itself generous, can kindle fires on the hearths of generosity. The men of moral grandeur, particularly those whose inventive and simple heroism has opened new paths to virtue, are revealers of metaphysical truth .... It is in studying those great lives, in striving to experience sympathetically what they experience, that we may penetrate by an act of intuition to the life principle itself."<sup>556</sup>

Not the least of the inadequacies of the view of art here implied is precisely in the point of the contrast between art and morality. Bergson seems to regard artistic creation as simply a two-term relation of artist to work of art, without enquiring whether the artist is not also capable through his art of revealing "metaphysical truth" or of "intensifying/..

"intensifying the action of other men". This does not however nullify the positive point that is being made, or its import for Bergson's treatment of morality and religion. It has been argued that Bergson comes to the study of human life with a ready-made criterion of essential humanity, which is creativity. He now argues that it is in the sphere of morality and religion that man is most distinctively creative or human. This means, paradoxically, that the mystics, exceptional beings, are selected for special study because in their very difference from other men they reveal what all men essentially are. They are the creators par excellence, revealers of metaphysical truth not in the sense of reporting facts, bringing back information from some sphere of privileged access, but as doers of truth, those whose lives are most fully human.

It is in this perspective only that the partial and selective treatment Bergson gives to mysticism can be understood. His review of the field is very brief, and though he appeals to a broad unanimity of mystical experience, he offers no criteria as to what is to be regarded as belonging to this central tradition, or at least no criteria drawn from mysticism itself. There is no discussion of types of mysticism such as the introvertive and extrovertive,<sup>557</sup> theistic or atheistic,<sup>558</sup> and no account of the problem of the place of the sense of the "numinous" in mystical experience. Bergson is not the first to distinguish between active mystics and the more contemplative type, nor the first to value the former more highly,<sup>559</sup> but it is obvious that in calling Christian mysticism "complete", and in making Jesus Christ the "supermystic",<sup>560</sup> he is not using criteria drawn from the consideration of mysticism alone.

It would nevertheless not be right to conclude from this that Bergson favours Christianity simply because he is European, or because the years of preparation of Morality and Religion were also the years in which/..



which he was moving towards that "moral adhesion" to Catholicism which he professed in his will.<sup>561</sup> He takes from mysticism what he requires to complete and buttress his own doctrines. He does not differentiate between introvertive and extrovertive mysticism because his doctrine of the intuition of life requires both the "inward way" of introspection and intuition and the "unifying vision" wherein the soul of the mystic is one with the great surge of the current of life itself. This does not mean that Bergson is falsifying the reports of mystical experience. Even Otto, who distinguishes most sharply between these types of experience, to the extent of finding a "direct antithesis", admits that

"this second way (of unifying vision) is often so closely bound up with that of the first, that its peculiarity is not immediately noticeable."<sup>562</sup>

Further, Bergson's identification of this principle of life with God himself, and his assertion that the soul or life of the mystic is at least partially coincident with it, not only echoes the tones of even those Christian mystics who have notoriously from time to time found difficulty in differentiating the self from God, but is also due to Bergson's own separation of intuition from intelligence, which alone is able to formulate this experience in dogmatic or conceptual terms. Finally, God as love and the object of love, which is the "whole contribution of mysticism",<sup>563</sup> is certainly consonant with a central mystical tradition, particularly in Christianity, but it is also and perhaps primarily that fusion of knowing and feeling, willing and acting, which from Creative Evolution onwards is seen as the fullest conscious expression of the principle of life itself. The mystics then are those "supermen" in whom is seen human life as it ideally is - Bergson would say as it really is. In them, or in the best of them, we see the paradigm of the religious life, what all men could be and indeed are intended/..

intended by nature to be.

As a final indication of how Bergson selects from the phenomena of mysticism rather than studying them in their own terms, it is interesting to compare what he says about mysticism with the lists of typical characteristics offered by other students to define mystical experience and religion. W.T. Stace<sup>564</sup> finds no universal core of mystical experience such that each element is present in all experience called mystical, but he does offer to classify those characteristics which can be called typical. He gives two lists of such characteristics, one for introvertive and one for extrovertive mysticism. These lists are similar except for the first two "nuclear" elements". It is noticeable that what Bergson means by complete mysticism does not correspond at all well with the central elements of introvertive mysticism. The

"Unitary Consciousness, from which all the multiplicity of sensuous or conceptual or other empirical content has been excluded, so that there remains only a void and empty unity .... non-spatial and non-temporal",<sup>565</sup>

is altogether too static a vision or experience for Bergson, for whom the mystic rapture may indeed be rest, but a rest

"as though at a station, where the engine is still under steam, the onward movement becoming a vibration on one spot, until it is ready to race forward again."<sup>566</sup>

This corresponds much more with Stace's extrovertive mysticism, where the central element is the unifying vision expressed by the formula "All is one". Even this only corresponds closely to Bergson in the secondary characteristic of

"the more concrete apprehension of the One as being an inner subjectivity/...

subjectivity in all things, described variously as life, or consciousness, or a loving Presence, the discovery that nothing is 'really' dead."<sup>567</sup>

The other characteristics mentioned by Stace, the sense of objectivity or reality, of joy or peace, the feeling that what is apprehended is holy or divine, paradoxicality, ineffability - receive unequal emphasis in Bergson. The sense of objectivity is taken for granted, the experience of joy or blessedness is insisted on, but though Bergson readily uses references to God as the source of the experience, he does not justify this by making anything of the awful, holy, or numinous quality of the experience. Bergson does not refer to the experience itself as paradoxical, paradox appears rather in the attempt to express or interpret the ineffable. On the other hand, it is notable that Stace, in what he presents as a list of the most common elements of mysticism, makes no mention of what for Bergson are the defining characteristics of complete mysticism, namely, action and love.

It is interesting however to compare Bergson's account not only with other scholars' analysis of mysticism, but with a representative account of what is meant by the nature of religious experience in general. Joachim Wach, himself drawing on a vast erudition, offers four criteria of the nature of religious experience which correspond much more closely with Bergson's dynamic religion than any account of mysticism per se.<sup>568</sup> Wach's criteria are; first, that

"religious experience is a response to what is experienced as Ultimate Reality";<sup>569</sup>

secondly, that this is a

"total response of the total being .... it is the integral person which is involved, not just the mind emotion or will";<sup>570</sup>

thirdly, /..

thirdly, that the experience is intense, at least potentially

"the most powerful, comprehensive, shattering, and profound experience of which man is capable";<sup>571</sup>

and lastly

"the fourth criterion of genuine religious experience is that it issue in action".<sup>572</sup>

It is obvious that there is here a closer and more complete correspondence with Bergson's dynamic religion than was found in the summary of mystical experience. As was noted in the case of Stace's "sense of objectivity", the fact that this response is to ultimate reality is taken for granted, though here Bergson's terminology is modelled more on that of the mystics than on that of ordinary religious experience.

"Gone is the distance between thought and the object of thought .... the radical separation between him who loves and who is beloved. God is there."<sup>573</sup>

The second point, the total involvement of mind, emotion, and will, is characteristic of what Bergson means by intuition at its highest, but though it thus involves the total being Bergson's characteristic use of the word "emotion" emphasizes the intensity of the experience. Finally, the criterion of action is that which Bergson uses to define dynamic religion.

It is not of course the intention here to argue that mysticism and religion are very different things. Any lists of characteristics of both are bound to overlap at certain points, and indeed Wach and Stace could well have included other characteristics which would make the criteria given overlap still further. The purpose of this comparison here is to emphasize the fact, which is significant for the interpretation of Bergson's philosophy of religion, that when he offers what purports/..

purports to be a study of the exceptional and rare experiences of the mystics, his treatment tends to emphasize the respects in which mystical experience is like other religious experience, and to minimize the importance of the respects in which mysticism is singular. In particular, Bergson finds the very meaning of its highest and most complete expression only in the context of the life of the religious community.

It will be convenient here to summarize the argument up to this point. Thereafter, in a final section, the elements of static and dynamic religion can be taken together in a consideration of Bergson's philosophy of religion as a whole.

The first and purely negative point arising out of the argument of this section is that the third chapter of Morality and Religion is not a study of mysticism as such. It is not only too brief, but too partial and selective to be so considered, and the treatment of mysticism is obviously directed by criteria which are not drawn from the study of mystical experience itself.

Secondly, and more positively, it has been argued that Bergson's account of dynamic religion is to be seen as the completion of his doctrine of intuition. We may briefly recall the suggestion made in Chapter III above<sup>574</sup> that intelligence and intuition in Bergson's thought should be interpreted as suggesting a kind of scale of knowing, where intelligence and intuition interpenetrate. At one extreme is the knowledge typical of mathematics and physics, where intuition is minimal and intelligence most "pure". In the perception of change and movement, in the biological and psychological sciences, intuition, which is rooted in the intuition of the self's own duration, is increasingly necessary for the recognition of the reality of change and life. Towards the other end of the scale, the fullest intuition, not only of duration, but of what/..



what it is to be a person, was seen to be necessary to the recognition of other persons and hence necessary to any specifically human or personal activity. In the mystical experience Bergson is describing the other end of this scale of knowing, where intelligence is minimal, "knowledge" is beyond all conceptualisation, and immediacy, identification is all. In Bergson's own terms, he is showing in the mystical experience how intuition at its fullest "dilation" is the apprehension of ultimate metaphysical truth. Since that which is apprehended however is dynamic, is life itself and its direction and end, its apprehension can only be a self-identification with it. To "know" this, is to be one with it in that dynamic unity of knowledge, feeling, will, and action which Bergson sums up in the word "love". This love however is first of all to be understood through its root in intuition.

However, though it has been argued that the primary context for the understanding of Bergson's dynamic religion is that of his epistemology, or his account of experience, there is also a second context. Dynamic religion is also the completion of the consideration of the whole of morality and religion. Here it has been contended that Bergson is again concerned to relate the exceptional mystical experience to the whole of human life. This he does in two senses. First, in terms of the life of the mystic himself. Bergson does not seem to consider the possibility of a mystical experience or vision which would not radically affect the whole life of the person concerned.<sup>575</sup> More importantly, it is by this effect that the quality of the experience is finally judged. The "complete" mystic is known not by what he reports of his raptures and visions, but by the energy of creative love he shows in his life, by being not simply a man who has seen, but one who is possessed by the God of his vision. Secondly, the character of this creative energy is that of love/..

love of humanity. Here again, mystical experience, dynamic religion finds its meaning in terms of human life as a whole, not this time that of the individual, but the life of the community, of all humanity.

This argument then has been designed to show that dynamic religion, understood as the experience of the mystic or the similar enthusiasm inspired by him in his followers, is the fullest expression of that intuition of duration which is the defining characteristic of personal consciousness. It has also been contended that this interpretation in terms of the genesis of intuition is confirmed and expanded when dynamic religion is considered in more specifically religious terms. The vision of God, or union with Him, which is the highest point of religious experience, is finally only expressible in terms of a quality and direction of life which indicates, indeed incarnates, the meaning and purpose of all human life. In other words, beginning from the intuition of duration, personal being, we can at least theoretically move forward or upward by a progressive expansion to something like mystical intuition, and conversely, from the stand-point of this experience, its possessor, or he who is possessed by it, can see as it were retrospectively how not only his own life but the life of all humanity is taken up into and explained by this vision.

That is to say, what Bergson calls the vision of God as love and the object of love means, or is best interpreted to mean, the apprehension of and entering into the "meaning of life". This was of course the interpretation given to Bergson's discussion of morality, but it cannot be simply extended to religion without a discussion of what is meant by "God" in his philosophy of religion. This question has intentionally not been dealt with in this section, since it is best considered in the context of Bergson's view of religion as a whole, both/..

both static and dynamic. To that consideration we must now turn.

#### V.1 - The Union of the Static and Dynamic

Religion as it is now familiar to us, particularly in the Christian West in which Bergson was most interested, is "mixed" religion. Bergson does not himself make much attempt to describe how the elements of static and dynamic religion fit together to form this mixed religion. His isolation of and sharp contrasting of these elements is suggestive of method and a warning against possible errors rather than a description or analysis of the whole phenomenon of religion.

It is suggestive first of all for sociology, where the convergence of the ideas of Bergson and Weber has already been noted.<sup>576</sup> Bergson's analysis of static religion takes account of religious institutions and beliefs in their functional aspect, but dynamic religion also points, as does Weber's prophet, to the primary importance of the individual charismatic leader for the understanding of religion and of social change. Bergson's insistence on the creative element in the work of the mystic emphasizes that religion has to be understood in some sense from within. This was seen to be necessary even in the case of static religion, where it was possible to miss the "point" of religious beliefs and institutions unless these were seen in some way as affirming and protecting a sense of the significance of human life. This point is even more clearly brought out by a consideration of dynamic religion. For while static religion was taken to be primarily a defence against what might be called the threat of meaninglessness implicit in the world of chance and inevitable death, dynamic religion makes human life the centre and focus of the "meaningfulness" of the world-as-a-whole. It is also creative, in the sense of breaking through established structures of meaning to a new interpretation/..

interpretation of the world and human life.

Thus if there are in religion these dynamic elements as described by Bergson, a sociology of religion which tries to understand

"the whole range of human behaviour and valuations as problems of individual and group adjustment"<sup>577</sup>

will be inadequate even as sociology. In his discussion of the possibility of "understanding" a primitive society, Winch was concerned to point out that we cannot assume that we can make "sense" of a society or form of life whose criteria of rationality are very different from our own. Though criteria of rationality cannot be changed at will, some attempt can be made to understand a primitive society in its own terms or in terms of a higher unity of intelligibility. Bergson sharpens this point by his introduction of the element of creativity in dynamic religion. For if the insights of mystic or prophet are such as to offer a genuinely new interpretation of the world and experience, then it will be even more important for the sociologist to make the effort of sympathy or imaginative understanding which alone can make sense of the manner of life of individuals and groups affected by such beliefs.

Bergson's account of religion is suggestive also for theology. Though Bergson's direct influence on theology appears to have been slight, a large number of Catholic philosophers, among them J. Maritain,<sup>578</sup> E. Gilson,<sup>579</sup> G. Marcel,<sup>580</sup> and in a different way Teilhard de Chardin,<sup>581</sup> acknowledge a great debt to him. J. Pelikan however, has indicated directions in which Bergson has had and may still have influence in theology. First, in the understanding of the church, in its double aspect as spiritual community and as institution, H.R. Niebuhr, having learnt from Troeltsch to discern the social motives underlying theological rationalization, turned to Bergson for a more dialectical critical armament than/..

than that afforded by sociology alone.<sup>582</sup> According to Pelikan,

"the extent of Bergson's significance for Niebuhr could not be measured by a catalogue of the number of times he quotes The Two Sources. For the crucial problem of institution and dynamis, Bergson provides Niebuhr with an apparatus that is both critical and realistic."<sup>583</sup>

It is realistic because a theology of the church cannot be based exclusively on a consideration either of its institutional aspect or of its appearance as a community of the spirit.

"Bergson has helped (Niebuhr) to realise that static religion is as inadequate as it is inevitable."<sup>584</sup>

Another area in which Bergson is at least suggestive for theology is on the role of intelligence in religion. Here Pelikan compares Bergson with Loisy, who wrote a full-length reply to Bergson's book which demonstrates a more striking convergence of opinion than disagreement.<sup>585</sup> This basic agreement is on the subsidiary place they assign to dogma and theological formula in religion.

"Religion is not in the first place a set of ideas, but an intuition about life, expressed in the form of myth and ritual; in this Loisy and Bergson concur."<sup>586</sup>

Not that they are alone in this,

"this insight into the relatively subsidiary role of intelligence, i.e. of dogma and theology, in the religious life has become a self-evident presupposition for historians of Christianity as well as for historians of non-Christian religions. Lex orandi lex credendi is now a basic axiom of theological research."<sup>587</sup>

Whatever may be true for historians of religion, Pelikan is perhaps going too far if he means us to understand that this subsidiary role of intelligence is basic also for systematic theology. It is here that Bergson's/..



Bergson's view of the nature of religion contains an implicit criticism of some views of the nature of theology itself. This implied criticism is on two levels, first of the character of the concepts which are or should be central and regulative within theology, and secondly of the nature of theology and its place in the religious life.

A central place has always been given in Christian theology to the idea of divine initiative, to God's saving grace coming unsought to sinful men. In modern theology this idea has more and more been subsumed under the concept of revelation, which, in whatever form it is conceived, is often taken to be the central and normative concept for theology. Sharp criticism has recently been directed to the concept of revelation, principally on the grounds of its questionably biblical basis and its unsuspectedly complex logical character.<sup>588</sup> Now Bergson does not venture any remarks on revelation as such, though it is clear that for him a special revelation cannot be a revelation as it were "ex nihilo", but rather an illumination and identifying of the "general revelation" of the intuition of life. His suggestiveness for theology however is rather from the stand-point of the religious life, of the recipient of revelation. Religion is the total response of life to and in some sense in the life that is God. It does not seem that an inescapably intellectual concept such as revelation, with its implication that religious response is primarily a coming to know or a knowing something, can do justice to the active creative life which Bergson regards as the paradigm of religious faith. Theology must offer a comprehensible account of faith as well as of the object of faith, and the concept of revelation - as distinct from "Revelation", which is so often and so confusingly used as a near-synonym for God or Christ - necessarily concentrates attentions on the intellectual aspect of faith to the detriment of/..

of the emotional and volitional, and on its character as reception to the detriment of any understanding of the role of creative thought and imagination.

Here also Bergson's view of religion implies a criticism of theology at another level. For when the central theological affirmation is said to be that "God reveals Himself", and the concept of revelation made regulative for all theology, there is a tendency for theology itself to be thought of as in some way continuous with the act of revealing. Bergson's emphasis on religious response as creative life, as active participation in the life of God, enables theology to be seen as essentially a second order activity which attempts to interpret this total experience in ordered conceptual form. This is not so much a devaluation of theology as its reinstatement as one kind of response, that of the intellect and imagination, to the act of God on and in men.

The very tentative nature of these suggestions however serves to bring out a basic weakness in Bergson's treatment of religion. As was said at the beginning of this section, he does not himself bring together static and dynamic religion in any systematic way. He analyses directions, points contrasts, but gives no full account of how the elements of static and dynamic religion function as parts of a whole.

This can be illustrated by the difficulty of giving an account of moral problems on the basis of what Bergson says about closed and open morality. It was noted that these concepts do justice to certain elements of moral experience, but Bergson does not tell us how rule and aspiration are to be brought together in a whole, or even in particular cases. It is easy to see how an injunction like "Love your enemies" is not a moral rule, but is, along with like sayings, expressive of an insight into a quality of and attitude to life which cannot be expressed in/..

in terms of the old rules. It is also easy to see how the attempt will be made to translate this insight into a morality of rule. Morality is said to evolve and develop by the incorporation of new insights of this sort and their translation into terms of rule and custom even though at the cost of distortion of the original insight. But there is no indication of what, if any, is the role of rule morality in judging or evaluating the morality of aspiration. Even if it is accepted that the universal love which is the content of morality is itself the ultimate moral norm, we are not given any clear guidance as to how this love is to be acted out in concrete situations. It is in such situations that ethical problems arise, but Bergson does not make it clear whether he is advocating a kind of "situation ethic", or whether general principles are to be derived from the basic principle of universal love.

There is a similar gap in the treatment of religion. Bergson does not bring together in any systematic way the myth-making function of intelligence and the insights of dynamic religion. Accepting that the fullness of religious response is only displayed in action and love, we still do not know what status to assign even to the utterances of the mystics themselves, which are necessarily expressed in conceptual and symbolic form. Accepting also that dogma of itself cannot generate the true religious emotion, we may still want to ask what normative relation dogma bears to the way in which this emotion can be expressed. We are told that mysticism and religion

"are mutually cause and effect, and continue to interact on one another indefinitely",<sup>589</sup>

but the precise nature of this interaction in terms of theological formulation is left undefined.

This perhaps is no more than to say that Bergson is no more interested in/..

in systematic theology than in a system of ethics. There is more to the matter than this however. It will be argued in the concluding chapter that the interest of Bergson's work for the philosophy of religion is in the wider concept of "experience" which he offers as a result of incorporating the deliverances of intuition into it. The inadequacy of this account is not in the starting point of intuition, but in Bergson's failure to develop this notion in such a way as to do justice to fully personal experience.

The meaning of this criticism will become clearer when the specific problems of the philosophy of religion are examined in terms of Bergson's account of religious experience.

#### V.2 - God and Man

Bergson makes very clear his view that philosophy of religion should concern itself only with religious experience. His appeal to experience is however not to any and all religious experience but primarily to that of the mystics, who are apparently regarded as the paradigm case of what it is to have faith. The meaning of this appeal will first be discussed and clarified in relation to what is often taken to be the basic question of the philosophy of religion, that of the existence of God.

As was noted in section III, Bergson will have none of the traditional arguments for the existence of God which begin with an arbitrary definition of his nature and proceed to prove the existence of the being thus defined. It is not so much that he believes such proofs to be invalid as that the God thus defined is not the God of religion. If the Aristotelian God should by some miracle

"step down into the field of experience, none would recognize him."<sup>590</sup>

The true philosophical method is that of questioning experience to see what it has to teach us.<sup>591</sup> We may leave aside the question of whether or not the God of all the traditional proofs is as unrecognizable as God as Aristotle's Prime Mover, and consider rather if Bergson's appeal to experience alone can take account of the true importance, the religious meaning, of the traditional definitions. This is particularly urgent in the case of the existence, or necessary existence, of God. For the constant fascination of Anselm's ontological argument is at least partly due to the fact that the concept of necessary existence, whether thought to be comprehensible or not, is an attempt to express something which is intrinsic to the very idea of God. The idea that necessary existence is implied in any notion of God which can be religiously adequate has in fact been taken as the basis for an ontological argument in reverse, a disproof of his existence based on the alleged impossibility of "necessary existence".<sup>592</sup> This argument would then assert that if Bergson's appeal to experience avoids attributing necessary existence to God, it does so at the cost of religious depth and adequacy.

Without going into the details of Findlay's disproof of God's existence, it will be useful to examine its premise with a view to clarifying what Bergson means by the appeal to experience. Findlay points out that the whole pattern of feelings and attitudes termed religious or worshipful presume the unsurpassable supremacy in power, value, and other excellences in the religious object. This object must also be such that all other things depend upon it, itself depending upon nothing for its existence and nature. Not only this, but a more stringent demand,

"we can't help feeling that the worthy object of our worship can never be a thing that merely happens to exist, nor one on which all other objects merely happen to depend. The true object of religious reverence must not be one, merely, to/..



to which no actual independent realities stand opposed, it must be one to which such opposition is totally inconceivable."<sup>593</sup>

God, that is, must necessarily exist, and this Findlay believes is "on a modern view" impossible, since

"necessity in propositions merely reflects our use of words, the arbitrary conventions of our language."<sup>594</sup>

We may leave aside for the moment the question of whether the "modern view" can have the consequence Findlay wishes to imply, and concentrate on the premise of the argument.<sup>595</sup>

This disproof of the existence of God rests on the analysis of religious belief, and on the alleged requirement of it that God necessarily exists. But whatever theologians and philosophers may have said, it is difficult to see how this requirement can be implicit in religious faith or worship itself. It may well be agreed that Findlay's "full-blooded worshipper" finds the non-existence of God "inconceivable" in some sense. He cannot "see the world" in any other way than as the handiwork of God, he may even claim, as Bergson's mystics would, to have seen or known God in some immediate fashion, and therefore cannot disbelieve. But none of this implies logical inconceivability. A scholastic philosopher might reply to a sceptic's statement "God does not exist" by accusing him of self-contradiction, but the ordinary believer, however full-blooded, would surely reply "You are mistaken". Religious claims about the existence of God have a factual character, the character of "making a real difference"<sup>596</sup> as Findlay himself revealingly says, and do not seem, at least as expressing the attitude of the worshipper, to have anything of the logical character Findlay finds in them. It would no more occur to a worshipper to demonstrate the existence of God from a definition of his being than, at the other extreme, it would occur to him to say that God "just happens to exist".

But Findlay's sharp distinction between "necessarily existing" and "just happening to exist" points to the real nature of the problem. For it points to the fact that God's existence is different from the existence of anything else. The difference is certainly not that his non-existence is inconceivable. We might better argue that the difference is demonstrated by the fact that his non-existence is so often and so easily conceivable. The problem is, given that logically necessary existence is of no religious interest, what does the believer want to say to differentiate the existence of God from that of things that "just happen to exist".

It is on this point that Findlay's argument serves to illustrate what in Bergson's view is the error of traditional arguments. Both Findlay and Bergson begin with religious experience, one with an analysis of worship and the other with an appeal to mysticism. We are not here concerned with the fact that Findlay's purpose is to disprove the existence of God. The essential difference of method is that while Findlay finds that in the religious attitude is implicit the idea of God's necessary existence, Bergson begins with necessary existence and finds the religious attitude appropriate to it. Bergson does not state the matter in this way, but this is the sense of his appeal to experience and his contribution to the problem of how to regard the assertion of the existence of God as more than merely contingent and yet not necessary in the sense of merely reflecting a linguistic convention.

The logical justification for saying that Bergson begins with the idea, or better, the apprehension, of necessary existence is found in Creative Evolution, in his criticism of the idea of "nothing".<sup>597</sup>

The argument is not used in Morality and Religion, but its point is implicit in the appeal to experience to teach us of the being and nature/..

nature of God. The argument in Creative Evolution occupies thirty pages, but its essential aim can be briefly stated. Bergson wishes to say that the question "Why should there be anything rather than nothing", which is often taken to be the metaphysical question and the source of the "metaphysical anguish", is not in this form a real question at all.

This is because implicit in the question is the idea of Nothing, the non-existence of anything, which is a pseudo-idea. When we have rid ourselves of the illusions engendered by this pseudo-idea, we shall be able to "think being directly"<sup>598</sup> and no longer be committed to believing that existence has meaning only as either contingent existence or as a logical construct.

Bergson's argument takes several different forms. He begins by pointing out, in a manner reminiscent of Descartes, that however systematically we doubt or even abolish in imagination the existence of things, we cannot form the image of a total void,

"for we cannot imagine a nought without perceiving, at least confusedly, that we are imagining it, consequently that we are acting, that we are thinking, and therefore that something still subsists."<sup>599</sup>

If it is objected to this that Nothing or the void is not an image but an idea, then we are led to examine more closely how this idea is arrived at. Psychologically the idea or pseudo-idea is built up by our recognition that there is no object which we cannot suppose annihilated or non-existent, and then, because we can imagine every object in turn as being suppressed, we proceed to the idea that they can all be suppressed together. But this is an absurdity, for to suppose an object non-existent is necessarily to assume another reality which supplants it. If I represent to myself an object A, and then think it non-existent, I cannot/..

cannot be subtracting from my representation the attribute "existence", for existence is not an attribute. What I am doing rather is to add to my conception of A, or substitute for it, the idea of an actual reality which excludes the object A. But I do not think this reality which excludes A directly, I am concerned only with the exclusion of A, and therefore do not see that implicit in, indeed equivalent to, my denial of existence to A, is the affirmation of the existence of that reality which excludes it. It is by this mistake in attention, our attending only to the exclusion of what we are supposing non-existent, that we are led into the logical error of believing "Nothing" to be a coherent idea, not seeing that

"the suppression of absolutely everything is a downright contradiction in terms, since the operation consists in destroying the very condition that makes the operation possible."<sup>600</sup>

It may be objected, however, that even if the mind must in some way affirm a reality in affirming non-existence, be it only the reality of the mind making the affirmation, this does not mean that "Nothing" can in no way be logically represented. If for instance, we allow a symbol to represent the totality of things, then the simple addition of a negation, or the symbol of negation, will suffice to represent the Nothing which is the non-existence of anything. Here Bergson believes we have the root of the difficulties and errors in the idea of Nothing. It lies in the power here ascribed to negation. For the logical status of negation is not the same as that of affirmation. Negative propositions are systematically incomplete.

It is clear what Bergson means by this in the case of attributive empirical judgements. "This table is red", affirms something of an object. "This table is not red", affirms nothing of an object, but only of/..

of the affirmative judgement which it denies, and is therefore incomplete in so far as it does not specify the state of affairs which excludes the table's being red. It is less clear how this applies to judgements of existence. He says that

"judgements which posit the non-existence of a thing are therefore judgements that formulate a contrast between the possible and the actual".

The affirmative converse of the judgement of non-existence here represents the possible, and the judgement of non-existence the actual which excludes it.

To say that two symbols which represent the non-existence of the totality of things is an affirmation of an actual state of affairs is perhaps not the best way of putting the matter, but at worst Bergson's argument reduces to another form of the first argument of the Cartesian type. Symbols do not "mean" by themselves, but only for a mind which perceives them. The necessary existence of this perceiving mind is itself a contradiction of the meaning of the symbols which signify "Nothing".

There is no need however to analyse the detail of Bergson's argument. The point is the fundamental one which he makes in a variety of ways throughout his work. In saying that the idea of Nothing is a pseudo-idea, he is not concerned simply to make a logical point, but to show again, by a reductio ad absurdum, what errors we are led into by absolutizing and extending to our knowledge of the real the habits of mind which serve our practical needs. Thus he has shown in earlier works how we miss the reality of the self in seeing only mental states, in trying to construct the self out of these or in seeking its reality beyond them. We misunderstand the nature of movement, change, and life, by/..



by breaking them up into static discrete "moments". So also we miss the primacy of being over non-being, the givenness of existence, by equating it with the totality of existing things. The existence of the world-as-a-whole is no more to be understood as the sum of existing things than the self is understood as a series of mental states.

This is more than just an analogy. We began this subsection with the question of how Bergson could do justice to the religious meaning or depth of the idea of the necessary existence of God without recourse to any form of the traditional ontological argument. Now the first point to be grasped from the argument against the idea of nothing is that necessary existence, that which inescapably is, is already given in the awareness of the self-in-the-world.<sup>601</sup> Bergson's philosophy is founded on experience, his appeal to mysticism is an appeal to experience for the knowledge of God. He cannot argue directly from experience to necessary existence, what he does is to try to show that radical contingency, the idea that reality fills a void where by right "nothing" ought to be, is absurd. This means that we are forced to return to experience to find necessary or self-sufficient existence there. Merleau-Ponty remarks that

"The God of Bergson is a being as unique as the universe, an immense this, and Bergson has extended even into theology his promise of a philosophy made for actual being, and which applies only to it,"<sup>602</sup>

It is at this point that the suggestion that we know God and the world as we know the self is relevant. Bergson himself says that the analysis of the idea of nothing is necessary

"to show that a self-sufficient reality is not necessarily a reality foreign to duration. If we pass (consciously or unconsciously) through the idea of the nought in order to reach/..

reach that of being, the being to which we come is a logical and mathematical essence, therefore non-temporal. And, consequently, a static conception of the real is forced upon us; everything appears given once for all, in eternity. But we must accustom ourselves to think being directly. .... Then the Absolute is revealed very near us and, in a certain measure, in us. It is of psychological and not of mathematical or logical essence. It lives with us. Like us, but in certain aspects infinitely more gathered up in itself, it endures." 603

It was remarked earlier that Bergson does not begin with an idea of God and argue to the necessary existence of the referent of this idea, but rather begins with necessary existence and argues that the religious attitude is appropriate to it. Now, if it is accepted that the idea of "Nothing" is meaningless, that we are simply given an "immense this", it would seem that Bergson has exchanged one problem for another more intractable. How is God to be differentiated from the world, the universe, Being itself, or whatever it is that is simply given? What basis in experience could there be for distinguishing God from the world? For the problem here is that of accounting for religious experience. The "mystery of Being" may provoke a kind of metaphysical awe or wonder, but intrinsic to the specifically religious response of worship is a sense of the otherness of the object of worship.

It must be said that Bergson's reply to this question is at best unsatisfactory. For the purposes of this section, and indeed of this thesis, it is not important to criticize in detail what Bergson says about the nature and attributes of God, though there is not a great deal that he does say. What is important is to see whether the inadequacy of his theological metaphysics is due to a defect of his method, and if so in what this defect consists.

There/..

There is no need to repeat here the argument of Creative Evolution which was examined in Chapter III. It is essential, however, when Bergson's method is in question, to remember how that work followed from his earlier ones. It is on the basis of his exploration of the intuition of duration and the nature of the self that the cosmology of Creative Evolution is erected. Bergson himself makes this quite explicit in a note in the Vocabulaire Technique et Critique de la Philosophie;

"One of the objects of Creative Evolution is to show that the All is of the same nature as the self, and that it is grasped by a more and more complete apprehension of oneself."<sup>604</sup>

From the insight that

"for a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly",

we pass by an examination of the phenomena of life to an affirmative answer to the question which follows;

"Should the same be said of existence in general."<sup>605</sup>

Without going into the detail of the idea, we can say that the progressive expansion and deepening of the intuition of duration or conscious existence leads us to the apprehension that Life, the All, existence in general are of the same nature as the self. But in Creative Evolution "God" seems not to be any more than yet another name for what is referred to at other times as Life, or the All, and, as the method of intuition shows, the relation of God to the self is apparently that of whole to part. God in his creative activity may be represented as "a centre from which worlds shoot out", not a thing

"but a continuity of shooting out, .... He is unceasing life, action, freedom."<sup>606</sup>

Now/..

Now when, as in Creative Evolution, Bergson is speaking only of a cosmic God who manifests himself in the creative impetus in all things, it is perhaps not important that he should not indicate whether or how God is to be differentiated from "the whole", including conscious beings. Some indication of how the creator is ontologically and epistemologically to be distinguished from his creatures is necessary however if justice is to be done to religious attitudes, or at least to the attitude of worship.

This monistic tendency is a well-known crux of Bergsonian criticism. As early as 1908 Bergson was challenged by de Tonquédec to explain how the "centre of shooting out" could be of another nature from the "worlds" shot out.<sup>607</sup> He replied

"I speak of God as of the spring from which arise ...."currents" or "impetuses" of which each will form a world: he (God) therefore remains distinct from them."<sup>608</sup>

The letter of 1912 to de Tonquédec maintains the position that Creative Evolution, along with the earlier works,

"give rise clearly to the idea of a God creator and free" and the

"refutation of monism and pantheism in general".<sup>609</sup>

Even some fifty years later however, de Tonquédec, in common with many others, remained unconvinced that Bergson had made any intelligible distinction between Creator and creation.<sup>610</sup> Gouhier defends Bergson on this point, indicating the distinction between God as infinite and the finite creative impetus which is "given once for all",<sup>611</sup> and concludes that

"the distinction of creature from creator is that of a finite energy/..

energy from an inexhaustible source of energy. Nothing more, nothing less."<sup>612</sup>

Now though Gouhier's distinction is clear enough, he does not explain how Bergson can make it in terms of his own method of appeal to the intuition of duration. On the other hand, de Tonquédec and Maritain are going too far in suggesting that such a distinction is logically excluded.<sup>613</sup> The truth is that this controversy is an unprofitable one when carried on solely in terms of the interpretation of Creative Evolution. The "God" of Creative Evolution is not the God of theism, but neither is it meant to be. Intuition may reveal to us that

"reality is a perpetual growth, a creation pursued without end",<sup>614</sup> but it is difficult to see how an intuition founded on the apprehension of life and continuous creation alone can lead us to any conclusion about whether the "source" of life is distinguishable from life itself, or about whether this source can be addressed or spoken of in terms appropriate to a personal God. If the problems of the God of religion are to be approached empirically, then this can only be done by the consideration of religious experience. The problem of the distinction of creator from creature, and the further problem of the personality of God, may be raised in Creative Evolution but cannot be settled there. The solution should be found in Morality and Religion.

Bergson however, signally fails to provide such a solution. The reason for this failure can best be summed up by saying that he does not really explore the idea of personal experience. Time and Free Will signalizes the discovery of the intuition of duration as the foundation of our understanding of consciousness and personal being. Matter and Memory, Creative Evolution, and the volumes of essays extend this insight. Bergson insists that the understanding of motion, change, life, and in the/..



the end the interpretation of the world as a whole depend on the method of intuition. They cannot be accounted for solely in terms of the conceptualizing, scientifically orientated, intellect. But Bergson's own development of the idea of intuition never goes beyond the biological level. His intuition is the intuition of life, which means growth and continuous creativity, but not the intuition of fully personal being. Bergson's "self" is the self-in-the-world, and not the self-among-others .

This criticism can be illustrated in various ways. It was noted in sub-section V.I above that Bergson does not really bring together closed and open morality, static and dynamic religion, in any full account of either morality or religion. The reason for this is the lack of the personal dimension in either extreme, and it is only this personal dimension that can supply the common ground necessary to a unified treatment of morality and religion. The value of Bergson's emphasis on the "sense of human significance" in the explanation of religious belief was noted in the discussion of static religion. But on a closer view it becomes evident that "human significance" here is not significance for an individual person, but significance for society or the tribe. As the references to instinct and the comparisons with the hive or the ant-hill make clear, Bergson's model is always that of the organism rather than a society made up of individual persons. When he speaks of moral or religious conflict, this is always in terms of the conflict of the individual with society as a whole, and this is compared, explicitly or implicitly, with the momentarily self-conscious ant which might ask why it should continue to work.

Now the value of this treatment has been emphasized. It is certainly true that we can be misled about the nature of morality if we inquire/..

inquire into it solely on the basis of moral puzzlement or conflict, of seeking reasons for acting morally, while ignoring the fact that most of the time people do as they "ought" from sheer habit with no sense of constraint. It is also true that religious belief is not understood simply by considering its theological tenets and ignoring its social significance. But there are moral and religious problems and conflicts, and these cannot be accounted for solely in terms of self-assertion against and conformity to the habits or beliefs of society. There is in Bergson no note of the dimension of encounter; the recognition of the other not simply as duration or life but as a person of unconditioned value in himself.

It may be objected that closed morality and static religion are only meant to account for these aspects of religion which are quasi-instinctive or organic. But we are in no better case if we turn to open morality and dynamic religion for analysis of personal existence. Here too the model of Bergson's thought is that of the organism. In this case the organism is Life, Humanity, even the Universe.

It was noted in the previous section that Bergson's description of mystical experience owes more to his presuppositions about the mystic's contact with the vital impetus than to a detailed survey of mysticism. The basic intuition of duration or consciousness which is the defining characteristic of human existence is seen in its fullest development in the mystic, in his consciousness of his oneness with God and the creative energy by which he is possessed. But this creative energy is made the sole defining characteristic of the mystic, and through him, of authentically human existence. The relation of the mystic to God is really only describable in Bergsonian images like that of a spark in a flame, a drop in the ocean, a rivulet of the great current of divine energy. It/..

It may be true that such figures are common-place in accounts of mystic experience, but it is difficult to see how they can by themselves account for all that is meant by the "personhood" either of God or of man.

The divine energy is to be defined as love, but the idea of love in Bergson is curiously vacuous. It is as if Bergson wished the word "love" to retain all its peculiarly personal connotations and thus supply the personal dimension which is missing. But the truth is that the proposition "the divine energy is to be defined as love" is reversible. All that love seems to mean is "creative energy". There is little hint of the relation between this love and other uses of the word. It is said that this love "has no object", and this was interpreted earlier in an orthodox sense as meaning that the love of God for humanity is not determined by its object. But this cannot be equivalent to saying love has no object. For the essence of agape is giving unconditioned value to the object of love. To love man with agape-love is to love him for his sake, to act in terms of the other. But there is no clear concept of the "other" in Bergson.

This is the crux of the criticism not only of Bergson's idea of love but of the idea of God given in his analysis of mystical experience. It has been said that the personal dimension is lacking. The idea of the personality or personhood of God is often used as the basis for our talk about the kinship of man with God. Though God may be "wholly other" than man, yet the language of encounter is appropriate because God meets man in a "personal" way, or reveals himself as a Person. It is less often noticed however that the idea of personhood is integral also to the differentiation of man from God. The concept of a person, as Strawson points out in his analysis of the logically primitive nature of the concept, and as personalist thinkers like John MacMurray have argued/..

argued in detail, is only possible on the basis of a plurality of persons.

This is a point which was noted in the previous chapter in the context of the discussion of the mystics as moral creators.<sup>615</sup> The interpretation of mysticism there given in terms of statements about the "meaning of life" was seen to be dependent on the implicit recognition of the community of other persons which constitutes humanity. But this implicit reference to other persons never becomes explicit in Bergson. The relation of the individual to humanity is conceived of only in terms of similarity and not of similarity in difference. It is a relation of part to whole and not a relation of one to others.

While this lack of an explicit reference to interpersonal relations may be just acceptable in an account of moral experience which is concerned to bring out its significance for humanity as a whole, it is quite inadequate as an account of religious experience. There does not seem to be any way in which Bergson can distinguish man or humanity from God so as to do justice to the requirements of the distinctively religious attitude of worship. For, as we have seen, there is no substantial difference. Both God and man are defined as creative energy, as a movement and direction of life. To say that one is an inexhaustible source of energy and the other a finite energy is hardly enough to warrant awe and reverence. The "inexhaustible source" may be the universe, or life, even perhaps humanity. Thus, when there is also lacking any notion of "encounter", which even within a unity of substance might distinguish God from man as a Person, it must be concluded that Morality and Religion adds nothing essentially new, at least on the problem of the nature of God, to the metaphysical intuition of Creative Evolution.

It/..

It is this absence of the concept of persons, and consequent lack of clear differentiation of God from man which may also perhaps explain the other deficiencies of Morality and Religion in describing religious experience. Bergson notoriously pays scant attention to the problem of evil.<sup>616</sup> He remarks only that though "suffering is a terrible reality", yet none the less there is an

"empirical optimism, which consists simply of noting two facts; first that humanity finds life good, .... and that there is an unmixed joy, .... which is the final state of the mystic soul."<sup>617</sup>

He rejects the traditional argument from evil which turns on the impossibility of God's being both omnipotent and good since evil exists. Bergson points out that omnipotence should not be a logical concept, an a priori definition of God. By omnipotence the mystics mean

"a power of creating and loving which surpasses all imagination."<sup>618</sup> This seems rather to miss the point. The problem of evil is constituted by the fact that the existence of evil does not seem consonant with the government of the world by a wholly loving power, even one less than logically "omnipotent". Bergson himself has shown in his study of static religion how humanity finds life good and clings to it for reasons of a quasi-instinctive sort, and the unmixed joy of the mystics, who are also said to "ignore all problems",<sup>619</sup> supplies no very convincing answer to genuine perplexity about evil.

More interesting in the present context however is the fact that Bergson, in an account of religion explicitly based on experience, nowhere mentions sin. This may be taken as yet another indication of the lack of the concept of personhood in Bergson. Human existence in his philosophy is conceived between the polar concepts of energy and inertia, demonstrated in the life of the mystic at one extreme and the somnambulistic/..



somnambulistic quasi-instinctive life of the individual in closed society at the other. But the concepts of sin and guilt have meaning between such polarities as obedience and rebellion, humility and pride, love and hate. Such concepts as these cannot be accounted for except in terms of a fuller analysis of personality and personal relations than Bergson provides or can provide within his own terms of reference.

The conclusion then of this examination of Bergson's experimental approach to religion must be that the idea of God yielded by his analysis cannot do justice to the requirements of the distinctively religious attitude of worship. His emphasis on existence as immediately and inescapably given, as presupposed in any predication of attributes and as apprehended in the immediacy of the intuition of the self-in-the-world, was seen as sufficient to answer one requirement of this attitude; namely, that the ultimate, the object of worship, should not just "happen to exist".

On the other hand, due to the inadequate development of his own method, Bergson seems unable to distinguish properly between existence in general, or Life, or humanity, and the God of religious worship. Experience of God is dealt with solely in terms of intuitive sympathy and even partial identity with his creative energy. Though the word "God" is used in the familiar theistic manner at times, the examination of Bergson's usage has failed to show how it can refer to any distinguishable entity within or beyond the world, or to a personal presence mediated by the world. It has been argued that the lack of reference to the sense of the numinous or to the idea of personal encounter is due to Bergson's failure to progress beyond the biological or organismic categories of Creative Evolution to a conceptual framework which can take full account of personal relations.

In effect, what this means is that the examination of religion adds nothing to the examination of morality. In the previous chapter, the moral creativity of the mystic, whether expressed in terms of typically paradoxical moral injunction, of descriptions of visions, or in action, was interpreted as a kind of assertion about the meaning of life. Religious experience, as seen by Bergson, adds nothing distinctive to this. "Knowing God", as the mystic does, seems to be equivalent to knowing existence and life as it is, that is, to grasping its direction and intentionality and identifying oneself with it.

This interpretation is faithful to Bergson's method if not to his intention. The most obvious interpretation of his work on morality and religion is the monistic or pantheistic view attributed to him by many of his critics. This, as we have seen, is an interpretation Bergson explicitly refuses. If then Bergson has failed to point beyond human experience to make the existence and nature of God "showable" in the way he intended,<sup>620</sup> it seems more faithful to his avowedly empirical method to restrict interpretation to what he has said about human experience.

This is in line with the way in which the vital impetus was dealt with in Chapter III. Just as it was seen then that the vital impetus need not be interpreted in a vitalist sense as an extra "something" in life and living things, so the point of the "meaning of life" interpretation of Bergson's account of morality and religion is to show that this account is not dependent on a monistic or pantheistic theology. This restricted interpretation has the further advantage of pointing to those specifically religious experiences that Bergson has not dealt with, and to the way in which his method must be developed in order to account for them.

This/..

This does not mean that Bergson does not have positive insights to add to the analysis of religious experience. The concluding chapter will attempt to summarise these insights and set them in the context of contemporary work in the field.

## CHAPTER VI

C O N C L U S I O NI.1 - Introduction

The continuing interest of Bergson's work for philosophy in general and the philosophy of religion in particular is in his method of appeal to experience. There is no need here to recapitulate the argument of his early works, which was summarized and discussed in Chapter III.<sup>621</sup> It was seen then that the problems of morality and religion arose for Bergson when, after extending the fundamental intuition of duration to the phenomenological description of the self-in-the-world in Matter and Memory and the cosmology of Creative Evolution, he sought to complete his account of experience by the examination of specifically human or personal experience.

The interest of this thesis is in Bergson's philosophy of religion, and in this concluding chapter his positive contribution will be summarized and elucidated by comparison with some recent work in the field.

The most obvious comparison for Bergson's work is found in the realist metaphysics of such philosophers as Lloyd Morgan,<sup>622</sup> Samuel Alexander,<sup>623</sup> and A.N. Whitehead.<sup>624</sup> The emergent evolution of Lloyd Morgan and Alexander, and the philosophy of organism and process of Whitehead have an evident basic similarity of viewpoint to Bergson's philosophy. Whitehead in particular has also influenced other contemporary writers who have attempted to use the basic concepts of process philosophy in theology and philosophy of religion.<sup>625</sup> Bergson might also usefully be compared with Teilhard de Chardin, on whom he had an acknowledged influence.<sup>626</sup>

No comparison of Bergson with these thinkers will be offered here however. This is firstly because despite a basic similarity in his approach/..

approach, Bergson differs from most of those mentioned above in that he does not attempt to work out a system of metaphysics. He conceived his philosophical enterprise as being that of following out certain "lines of facts", or aspects of experience, independently of one another, and though certainly these "lines of facts" might suggest a metaphysical view-point, Bergson is less concerned with systematic adequacy than with the account to be given of these aspects of experience - such as duration and change, life and consciousness, and in religion, mysticism - and the method of enquiry appropriate to them.

In the second place, since not only the content but also the manner of Bergson's philosophy is now so unfamiliar, it seems that the best way of elucidating his work is to compare him explicitly with a style of philosophical reasoning very unlike his own, and one moreover whose most vaunted virtue is its clarity.

In contemporary philosophy of religion, in the English language in particular, much attention has been devoted to the analysis of the function of religious and theological language. This has meant a shift of attention from the question of verification of statements about God and his attributes to a broader examination of the variety of usage and meanings in religious language.<sup>627</sup> Along with this development, and in part as a result of the same wider conception of the nature of philosophical and linguistic analysis which underlies the reappraisal of religious language, has gone a renewed interest in the possibility of metaphysics.

Now though it cannot be said that Bergson is a philosopher of "ordinary language", his rejection of a priori definitions of God and his relation to the world and his appeal to religious experience is a method, as will be shown, in many respects parallel to the "mapping of the/..



the distinctive functions of religious language".<sup>628</sup> A comparison with work of this kind will therefore be useful in clarifying the particular insights as well as the deficiencies of Bergson's approach. Furthermore, an appraisal of Bergson in the context of the analysis of language will bring into sharp focus one particular problem which has not been specifically dealt with, that of the expression of intuition. Bergson's whole philosophy can be said to be in one sense a continual protest against the idea that the living creative flux of reality can be represented by the concepts of the intelligence. We have therefore to ask in what way reality - particularly reality as apprehended by religious experience - can be represented.

## I.2 - Religious Language as Expressive of Conviction

A great deal of recent work of the analytical type in the philosophy of religion has been concerned with what is sometimes misleadingly called the "non-cognitive" functions of religious language. Thus R.B. Braithwaite has pointed out that whatever else religious language may be, it is also, and he believes primarily, expressive of allegiance to a moral policy.<sup>629</sup> P. Van Buren,<sup>630</sup> R.M. Hare<sup>631</sup> and others have argued that the language of religion and theology expresses a "vision of life", a way of seeing the world, and D.M. Evans,<sup>632</sup> in his analysis of the various performative functions of language brings together many of these insights in the concept of an "onlook". Within the "onlook" there is an intimate relation between utterances expressing ways of seeing or interpreting the world, expressions of feeling as well as of commitment, so that the whole is uniquely "self-involving". Other writers have sought to show how theological language, sometimes referred to as "second-order" language, which implies ontological or metaphysical statements, is in various ways dependent on the religious, or/..

or first order, language which is rooted in conviction or total life-orientation.<sup>633</sup>

Now while Bergson does not attempt anything like this analysis of the rich variety of meaning in religious and theological language, it can be said that his account of religion points to its uniquely "self-involving" character. His attempt to "make sense of" static or primitive religion in terms of its human significance expresses an insight into the social character of religion which is perhaps missing in some of those for whom "literal theism" is simply "meaningless".<sup>634</sup> Dynamic religion in particular, as exhibited in the paradigm case of the mystics, shows that the understanding of religion is primarily to be based on a quality or kind of life in which understanding, willing and feeling, moral commitment and aspiration are fused in a single purpose. Whatever may also be said of the cognitive elements of religious belief, Bergson shows by his example of the mystic that he understands religion as at least a total orientation of life in accordance with what the world is "seen as", the theatre of God's action and love.

It is not suggested that all the authors referred to above share the same view as to the ontological reference of religious and theological language. It is obvious however that the kind of view of religion in which they do concur has to be supplemented in some way. Religious language cannot be analysed without remainder into expressions of attitude, commitment, or life-orientation. The ontological assertions in it must either be wrong or must be accounted for in some way. Theologians in particular often call at this point on the insights of Martin Buber<sup>635</sup> into the nature of personal knowledge, and appeal to the encounter of man with the Divine "Thou" in order to ground the claim for the cognitivity of religious language. Apart however from the peculiar difficulties inherent/..

inherent in this step,<sup>636</sup> it has already been noted that the idea of "encounter", and indeed the category of the personal in the fullest sense, are missing from Bergson, so that no very useful comparison can be made on this point.

### I.3 - Religion as "Total Interpretation".

Another kind of defence of the cognitive status of religious language is that which sees religion as "ultimate explanation"<sup>637</sup> or "total interpretation".<sup>638</sup> This total interpretation may include "encounter", but the encounter is mediated by and inseparable from experience as a whole. One writer who argues in this way is J. Hick.<sup>639</sup> We cannot here go into the detail of Hick's argument, but it is essential to see that "total interpretation" here does not mean the "sum of all things" plus an interpretation which is arbitrarily given to it by the subject. Interpretation and perception of significance are an essential part of experience at all levels, moral obligation is as "given" in experience as the manner in which we perceive sensory phenomena, and as inexplicable. At the level of total interpretation,

"the theistic believer cannot explain how he knows the divine presence to be mediated through his human experience. He just finds himself interpreting his experience in this way".<sup>640</sup>

This is not of course an argument for the existence of God, but an attempt to show the similarity of cognitive structure in our knowledge of the world, of persons, and of God. We need not at this point go into the difficulties of this conception, but go on to see that Hick provides a procedure for the verification at least in principle of the theistic view. For theism entails the assertion of the survival of bodily death and therefore the possibility in principle of eschatological verification.

Hick/..

Hick makes his point by constructing a counterparable to that given by Wisdom, of the universal garden in which we look for traces of the divine Gardener.<sup>641</sup> Hick's parable is of two travellers on a road, one of whom believes the road leads to a Celestial City, the other that it leads nowhere. In terms of their beliefs they interpret the hardships and the pleasures of the journey differently, the one as being trials of his purpose or encouragements to his faith, the other as simply the luck of the road in an aimless ramble. Now though the issue between the travellers is not, while they are on the road, an experimental one, it is nevertheless a real issue, as will become clear when they turn the last corner.

"Their opposed interpretations of the road constituted genuinely rival assertions, though assertions whose assertion-status has the peculiar characteristic of being guaranteed retrospectively by a future crux."<sup>642</sup>

This parable also has difficulties of its own, both internally and in its implied extension of the idea of "evidence". The example of Hick's total interpretation and its possible verification is introduced however to illuminate similar and contrasting features in Bergson's argument. For Bergson's metaphysic is also a "total interpretation". Beginning from the perception of the inadequacy of the logic of space to the experience of duration, his examination of perception, of life, and finally of the specifically human activities of morality and religion are stages in his attempt to build up a view of the world as a whole. Metaphysics is "integral experience",<sup>643</sup> and it must therefore account as much for consciousness, emotion, and moral endeavour in its "total interpretation" as it does for sensible objects.

It should be noted at this point that it is misleading to refer to all the functions of religious language mentioned earlier - as expressing/..

expressing life orientation, moral commitment and so on - as "non-cognitive". For moral commitment, perception of purpose, life-orientation enter into a total interpretation of the world in a variety of ways. They are first part of what is to be known. Moral obligation, the fact that men do seek meaning and purpose in life, are as much a part of the "given" as the facts of consciousness. But our ways of seeing the world are also part of the structure of our knowledge. Bergson says in his analysis of perception in Matter and Memory that the shape even of our sensory world is the representation of our virtual action upon it, and that the great error of metaphysical systems has been to extend to our knowledge of reality as a whole the habits of mind which are appropriate only to action. At this higher level moral commitment and life-orientation enter necessarily into our knowing by helping to determine what is seen as significant or important in the ordering of experience. At yet another level these attitudes have a heuristic function. The way in which we have seen and do see the world helps to determine the way in which it will be seen.

This last point is one to which we shall return. At the moment we are concerned with the assertion that "total interpretation", in particular a theist interpretation, is somehow objective. Bergson certainly claims this for the mystic. It is he who "sees in order to see, and no longer in order to act".<sup>644</sup> Bergson insists throughout his work that an existence can only be given in a perception, and the example of the mystics is meant to show that ultimate reality is perceived by at least some people in the only way in which it is possible to "perceive" it, by entering into it intuitively and becoming one with its life.

If however we return to the question of what can be said about such/..



such experience, it is true, as J.A. Martin says of Hick, that

"to use the terms perception, apprehension, and interpretation so nearly synonymously is surely to blur the edges of some important and useful distinctions."<sup>645</sup>

It is important to see, however, at what points the distinctions become necessarily blurred because the interpretation is a total interpretation. The situation is on one point analagous to that where several different interpretations might be given to a problem picture, which can be seen as a geometrical pattern, or as a face, or as a collection of random dots. The point of similarity here is that the man who claims to see a face will insist that he is not "interpreting" in the sense of adding to the picture, but is simply reporting what is there. From this point of view even to say that there is no face but only random dots is not to say anything more basic than that there is a recognizable pattern, but is a rival interpretation. In a similar way the theist interpretation claims that God is neither added to nor inferred from what is given, but is recognized in it. Here however, the "given" is all that there is, there is no appeal to any other facts or situations for comparison to settle the issue. By the use of the word "cognition" Hick is making the point that the theist claims not to be "interpreting" in any sense other than in which all experience is interpreted, but to be simply recognizing what is given.

Before going on to the question of how such assertions are to be substantiated, two subsidiary points should be made.

The first concerns the use of the word "know" or its cognates in connection with total interpretations. Even if the "blurring of the edges" of the distinction between perception and interpretation implicit in the problem picture analogy is accepted, it is true that "cognition" is/..

is an unfortunate word to use of the apprehension of God in the theist's interpretation of the world. For if "knowing" implies the objectivity of that which is known, it also implies on the subjective side altogether too much detachment from the object of knowledge to be suitable to describe the act of faith. That is, as was remarked earlier, it may be useful to display in analysis the "non-cognitive" elements of faith such as moral commitment, reverence, life-orientation and so on, but this cannot be done in such a way as to suggest that they are separable from "cognitive" elements.

It is doubtful in any case if talk of "knowing" God is theologically in order, at least within the Christian tradition, but apart from this it is difficult to see to what kind of faith a word like "knowing" would primarily apply. If the logic of "knowledge" is such that knowledge of an object is logically prior to the adoption of any attitudes, moral or emotional, towards it, and if "logically prior" here means that it is conceivable that a man should have such detached knowledge, then it is better not to speak of "knowing" God at all. The logic of "faith" is such that no separation is possible between "knowing" God and love, fear, reverence for, or commitment to him.

This at any rate is the sense of Bergson's characterization of faith in the mystic as a kind of "emotion". It is an intuition not of a fact about the world which can be simply known, but of a duration of life, of his own life and the life of the world, which is only "known" as it is affirmed and entered into in an act of commitment.

The second point is that Bergson does not conceive of the possibility that anyone could be aware of the creative energy of life or God in this way and yet refuse the total commitment to it which is the response of faith. This is partly because, as was noted, he does not/..

not really come to grips with the problem of the nature of interpersonal relations, and because there is no treatment at all of what religious experience knows as sin. Bergson sometimes speaks as if the creative energy of God were a kind of electrical current, which the mystics, like conductors, could not choose but transmit if once connected to the source of power.

It would be unjust, however, to interpret him in this wholly mechanical kind of way. All men have something of the intuition of life, and if Bergson implies that the mystics find the current of life or love irresistible, this is really making something like the traditional Christian assertion that God has made man for himself. It is the mystic who most clearly recognizes this as the meaning of his life and the life of all men. This is also the recognition of the meaning of his freedom, and it is not a denial of that freedom to say that what is recognized cannot then be unrecognized.

#### I.4 - Meaning and Verification

Whether a total interpretation is referred to as something "known" or not, it is clearly a kind of assertion. A religious total interpretation includes the assertion of the existence of God, or, as it does more clearly in Bergson, an assertion about the meaning of life. If the making of these assertions is said necessarily to include moral, emotional or volitional elements, this makes even more urgent the question of how such assertions are to be verified; or, in the absence of verification, of how their status as assertions is to be supported. Hick here appealed to the possibility of eschatological or post-mortem verification. Bergson gives no answer in these terms, but his treatment of creativity is, if perhaps even more questionable as evidence than Hick's post-mortem verification, at least a valuable contribution to/..

to the analysis of religious experience and one not often emphasized.

Freedom and creativity, in the sense of the bringing into being of the radically new and unforeseeable, are for Bergson essential elements in life and consciousness. In the last chapter indeed, he was criticized as having defined too narrowly both the nature of God and of man in terms of creative energy, thus making impossible any real distinction between them. The realization of, and full release of, this creative power is the meaning of the mystics' apprehension of God or the meaning of life. The purpose of love is to

"complete the creation of the human species and to make of humanity what it would have straightaway become, had it been able to assume its final shape without the assistance of man himself."<sup>646</sup>

Here also then is an eschatological reference. We cannot, however, really compare Bergson with Hick at this point. The sole purpose of Hick's parable was to establish the status of the theist total interpretation as an assertion verifiable at least in principle. We may note however, that if men are creators as Bergson says, then the present evidence for a total interpretation is even more ambiguous than were the incidents of the journey in Hick's parable. For we do not merely see things differently in giving different total interpretations, we are also making the evidence for our different interpretations. The mystic and his followers who see the meaning of life as the creation of a community of love and who commit themselves actively to this ideal are not simply allowing their interpretation to guide action, but are by their life-orientation and action adding to the interpretation, either confirming and enlarging it or producing a new perspective which may result in a changed interpretation.

But/..

But the significance of creativity cannot be dealt with in terms of evidence. In chapter III some of the logical peculiarities of the "knowledge" of a reality which includes the knower himself were discussed in the light of the analogy of "knowing oneself" through autobiography.<sup>647</sup> It was noted there that just as the self-knowledge gained from a consideration of the "objective history" of one's own life can lead to fuller understanding and therefore a change effected by the act of knowing in that which is known - in this case the self - so a total interpretation of the reality which includes myself and others as creators can change the reality which is interpreted. For "I" am both subject and part of the object of this interpretation.

This point was further examined in chapter IV in the interpretation of mysticism as being an apprehension of the "meaning of life".<sup>648</sup> It was argued there that this apprehension could be "objective" in the sense of seeing what is the meaning of life for all men, while yet not impugning the freedom of each man to "make" the meaning of his own life. This antinomy was resolved by Bergson's assertion that love is the meaning of life. For love is founded in that recognition of the other as a person which constitutes my own personhood, while the meaning of love is also such that it is necessarily a free and not a forced response. This suggested interpretation, as we have seen, requires a deeper exploration of the nature of "persons" and the meaning of "love" than Bergson ever gave, but this line of development is at least implicit in what he does say.

It may be objected however that this kind of interpretation of Bergson precludes any genuinely theistic interpretation. Though some kind of a case may be made for saying that the mystic, and through him humanity, creates the object of his faith, which is the community of love, this means that we cannot any longer speak of "God". For God does/..



does not emerge to self-consciousness in man. God is not the kind of object of faith which man can create.

It has been argued in the previous chapter that Bergson's logic, if not his intentions, does seem to incline to this position, but it was also said that this interpretation was not necessary. We may take seriously all that Bergson says about creativity while still leaving the way open for a development of his views in a theistic direction.

In order to see how this is possible it will be necessary to return to the question of religious language, in particular to the distinction between an intuition and its expression.

#### I.5 - Models and Images

It was remarked at the beginning of this chapter that in one sense Bergson's whole philosophy can be seen as a thesis about language and its functions.<sup>649</sup> His distinctions between spatialized time and duration, matter and mind, intelligence and intuition, the inert and the living, imply also a distinction between the kinds of language in which these realities can be represented.

Without repeating the discussion of Chapter III we may recall that in Bergson's view the cardinal error of all the great philosophical systems has been that of seeking to reconstitute or represent the real with the concepts of the intelligence. A genuine metaphysics on the other hand, will attempt to seize upon reality, which is movement, change and life, as it is in itself and not through the distorting medium of the "symbols" of intelligence.

Bergson admits the practical usefulness of concepts and that no reflective thought is possible without them. Even intuition must make use of the language of the understanding, "since only the understanding has a language."<sup>650</sup> The mistake is to assume that concepts can adequately express or contain an intuition. In fact, no language is

adequate to the expression of intuition, but since it must be expressed in some way for philosophy to be possible, this can best be realised by

"many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, (which) will be able, by the convergence of their action, to direct consciousness to the precise point where a certain intuition is to be grasped."<sup>651</sup>

The choice of images as different from one another as possible will prevent any one of them from becoming normative, from taking the place of the intuition itself.

It is in this sense that Bergson is to be understood when he says that metaphysics is the "science which claims to dispense with symbols".<sup>652</sup> It is not that metaphysics or religion can do without language, but that the normal language of both is pictorial imagery and metaphor.

"Comparisons and metaphors will here suggest what cannot be expressed."

This does not mean that such language is inexact,

"there are cases in which it is imagery in language which knowingly expresses the literal meaning, and abstract language which unconsciously expresses itself figuratively. The moment we reach the spiritual world, the image, if it merely seeks to suggest, can give us direct vision, while the abstract term, which is spatial in origin and claims to express, most frequently leaves us in metaphor."<sup>653</sup>

How is this theory of language to be applied to religion? Here again it will be helpful to compare Bergson with contemporary philosophy of religion. It is obvious that his treatment of imagery is very similar in many respects to the idea of a "model", which is receiving a good deal of attention at the present time. I. Ramsey, for instance, believes/..

believes that theology, like science, must rely on "models" to provide insight, to occasion "disclosure" of the mystery which confronts it.<sup>654</sup>

There is no need to summarize here Ramsey's argument. We may note first however, that for him as for Bergson there is no question of a single model "picturing" the reality to which it points.

"Metaphors and models, both enabling us to be articulate about an insight, are thus the basic currency for mystery, and we can spend our lives elucidating ever more faithfully the mystery in which metaphors and models are born."<sup>655</sup>

In order to make the comparison fruitful, in the sense of bringing out what is distinctive in Bergson, it will be useful to attempt a classification of some kinds of model. Ramsey does not do this in any systematic way, and Bergson does not of course attempt it at all. The function of his images is to be seen in his use of them rather than in any systematic exposition of how they are to be used.

If we begin with the question of how models and images provide insights, and what they are models of, it would seem that theological imagery or model-language has two functions which correspond to the two types of religious language already examined. That is, models or images may be hortatory or cognitive. The word "cognitive" is used here with the reservations noted in section I.3. "Interpretative" might also be used, though it could be equally misleading in another sense, and "cognitive - interpretative" is altogether too clumsy.

(a) A hortatory model is one which enjoins or engenders the kind of attitude which was seen to be expressed in the "non-cognitive" religious language examined in section I.2. Thus not only moral exhortations and commands, but "visions of life" which are descriptive in form, can be hortatory models in so far as they enjoin us to "look at/..

at things this way". There is no need to go into detail here, since it is evident that the language which is expressive of commitment, life-orientation and so on for its user can also be hortatory for others.

(b) Cognitive models are those to which Ramsey pays most attention. They are the images which provoke "insights" or "disclosures". Here again the parallel is close with the second type of religious language examined earlier. The reference of these models is to total interpretations, or to encounters, but we are reminded in this context that the language in which we speak of total interpretations or encounters with God is necessarily imagery. The religious language which speaks of God as Father, Judge, King, or as a Rock or a Tower, and Bergson's metaphysical images of the current of life sweeping through matter, of worlds shot out like rockets from an inexhaustible source of energy, of the community of love, all this is not descriptive language, but its intent is to provoke insight, recognition, of what is.

(c) Models or images have also a heuristic function. These functions often overlap, and the heuristic function does so in particular with that which was called cognitive, but it is useful to distinguish them in analysis. For models do not simply enable us to "be articulate about an insight" in the sense of pointing to an insight which we already have, but reflection upon the inter-play of different models gives rise to further insights for which there may be further models. M. Polanyi, in discussing scientific discovery, remarks that the surmises - or, we may say, the models - of the working scientist are

"born of the imagination seeking discovery. .... Courts of law employ two separate lawyers to argue opposite pleas, because it is only by a passionate commitment to a particular view that the imagination can discover the evidence that supports it."<sup>656</sup>

Whether/..

Whether it is true or not that lawyers are invariably "passionately committed" to their particular brief, it is certainly true that in philosophy and even more in theology a particular model or image may be used to discover new evidence and new insights going far beyond the insight to which the model originally referred. In Christian theology for example, the theories of the atonement discussed by G. Aulén,<sup>657</sup> have had an influence on the doctrines of God and of man which is rooted in the models from which these theories sprang.

Polany's reference to discovering the evidence which supports theory points also to the danger of this heuristic function of models. J. McIntyre has referred to these dangers in a discussion of the normative and integrative functions which theological models can have.<sup>658</sup> For a single model - McIntyre here might perhaps give the example of the "revelation model" in Christology - can have such powerful possibilities of articulation that it becomes the norm to which other models must be referred, and integrates the whole of the discipline in question in such a highly systematic way as actually to stultify the development of other models. This however is rather a question of the way in which models are used than one of the form of the models themselves, and serves to emphasize the point made by both Bergson and Ramsey that no model is "pictorial" in the sense that it can by itself represent the reality to which it is intended to point.

Now Bergson means his images to have all these functions. The images used to elucidate duration or creative evolution are hortatory in the sense that they are intended to lead the mind to adopt a certain point of view, and to break with a habitual mode of thought. They are cognitive in the sense that they lead not simply to a point of view, a "seeing as", but to the intuition which immediately grasps the reality which/..



which is suggested rather than expressed in imagery. They are heuristic not in the sense that we can generalize from one group of models and the reality to which they point to other "insights", Bergson rejects any suggestion that he simply generalizes his fundamental intuition of duration to include the whole of reality sub specie durationis.<sup>659</sup> This first intuition and its models led through the piecemeal analysis of memory and perception; matter and life, to the examination of mystical experience, which for Bergson is itself a kind of model which points to the possibility of the intuition of the world-as-a-whole.

(d) But images for Bergson have yet another function. The symbols of religion - here the word symbol is not used in Bergson's own restricted sense of a mere sign or counter - are also creative.

To understand how this is so it will be necessary to look more closely at the idea - or model - of a model. While Ramsey's book is undoubtedly richly suggestive for the understanding of theological language, particularly in his emphasis on the role of imagination in theology, there are none the less clear limitations to the usefulness of scientific models as "models" for the understanding of theological models or images. We cannot in particular assimilate the "mystery" which is disclosed by scientific models to the mystery with which theology deals, as Ramsey seems to do in some respects.

It is doubtful in the first place of talk of "mystery" is in order in science. Science does not confront mystery as Ramsay says, it confronts problems, and the rules of the scientific language game prescribe the terms in which the problem is to be stated and also how it is to be solved. It may be that a particular model will change the rules of the game, but the point of the model and the disclosure it occasions is that a/..

a further range of phenomena are "understood" in the sense of being brought within the universe of discourse of science. What lies outside the range of this universe of discourse is not necessarily a "mystery", still less a mystery for science, but is simply a fact or range of phenomena which are not amenable to the rules of the particular language game being played. As such, these phenomena may for practical, i.e. for scientific, purposes be ignored. Bergson saw this clearly. He does not protest against the measurement of time, movement or change, but against the extension of techniques of measurement and analysis to the explanation of realities with which they are not equipped to deal. But what is a "mystery" for physics or chemistry may be dealt with by the methods of biology. What escapes biology may be accounted for in psychology, and so on.

But we are not here concerned with any misrepresentation of science. The essential point is that scientific models help us to understand the role of a theological model, but scientific "mystery" is not a model for theological mystery. It is not suggested of course that Ramsey assimilates the ontological reference of theological models to the ontological reference of scientific ones, but there is an assimilation, and a misleading one, of the ways in which these models "disclose" or "provide insight" into reality.

There may be many differences between the way in which a scientific "truth" is disclosed by a scientific model from the way in which theological images disclose a "total interpretation". The one with which we are concerned at present is that a total interpretation is not only "disclosed" but created.

To understand this it must be realised that the religious "model", image, or symbol is more than a word or phrase. For Bergson the ultimate/..

ultimate model which discloses the meaning of life as love is the whole life of the mystic. His words, his silences, his actions in their diverse contexts fulfil the condition that there should be a wide diversity of "images", but the fundamental unity of direction and purpose, summed up in the word love, of all that he does and says points beyond the particular "images" of his speech and actions to another reality. But his words and actions are not only images. They also help to constitute that reality to which they point. The meaning of life is love, apprehended in the present as a direction, seen in vision as the future goal of the community of love which will be the completion of the creation of the human species. "Insight" into the meaning of life is not, like a scientific insight, a relation of observer to phenomenon, but involves the observer not only in that which is known or interpreted, but in the active constitution of the reality apprehended. A St. Francis kissing the sores of a leper is not only an image pointing to the love which is the meaning of life, but is an active participant in making that community of love which is the object of his faith.

There is an essential difference then between the eschatological references on which both Hick and Bergson rely in order to give meaning to their total interpretations. Bergson in Creative Evolution rejected a thorough-going teleological explanation of life as emphatically as a mechanical one. This applies also in religion. The Celestial City is not already there around the last corner as in Hick's parable. Bergson's parable would rather be that of a company of builders, some of whom believe that they are building a City of Joy and Love while others are concerned only to build houses for themselves and cultivate their own gardens without regard for others. Those who believe in the City do not pretend to know the details of its plan, but believe that in the end even the apparently haphazard arrangement of some of the buildings will/..

will be seen to form part of a great design and when that day comes all men, or all the builders, will see that this was what they were "meant" to construct.

The parable cannot of course be pressed too far, but it makes the point on which Bergson insists in his references to the mystics as creators par excellence. They are the believing master builders, whose instructions some at least may follow without having the vision of the City themselves. But the City of Joy and Love, which is the object of faith, is not yet. It is "real" to the master builders, who "know" that this is the purpose of their being in this place, but its reality is none the less dependent on their apprehension of it and their will to bring it into being.

We may return now to the question which was left unanswered at the end of the previous section. How can this kind of view be susceptible of a theist interpretation? The "object" of faith may be dependent on creative vision if it is a City or a community of love, but how can the reality of God be dependent on men's belief in him?

It is true of course that "creativity" is easier to interpret if "God" is not clearly distinguishable from "life", or "humanity". It was argued in the previous chapter that this is true of Bergson, and the parable of the builders is modelled on that interpretation. In terms of the discussion of images, what it means is that the image is not clearly distinguishable from what is symbolized. The loving acts of the mystic do not merely point to but are constitutive of the community of love.

But Bergson's point is valid also, though in a different sense, for the theist. He also participates in the creation of the object of faith. This does not mean that he brings God into existence by his faith/..

faith, or that the existence of God is dependent on the faith of all believers. For the "object of faith" is not the existence of God. Here it is helpful to recall the argument of Chapter V. It was seen there that Bergson does not argue to the existence of God. Existence, all existence, is simply given, and the question of God is the question of whether existence mediates a presence which is to be worshipped, obeyed, loved, addressed as God. Bergson did not succeed in showing how such a presence is or can be mediated in his terms, but for the theist who does apprehend this presence, Bergson's approach remains valid. God is not an extra entity inferred from the world. The object of faith for the theist is not God-as-existing, but God-as-loving-him-and-all-men. We may also here recall the point that was made in section I.3 above, that the "non-cognitive" moral, emotional, and volitional attitudes of faith are not separable from the aspect of recognition. It is not the case that God can be first known, believed in, recognized, and then feared or loved. If it is God that is recognized, then attitudes of loving or fearing, obeying or rebelling, are necessarily involved in the recognition of him as God. Finally, we must also recall that God is apprehended in a "total interpretation" which includes the life of the believer and all men.

Taken all together, what this means is that the life of love of the mystic, which is the most nearly adequate religious model or image, is a participation in the creation of the reality which it images.

The analogy between religion acts and artistic creation may help to make this clear.<sup>660</sup> The artist in creating his "art object" does not simply realize or express or "point to" the motivating experience or vision with which he began. In the process of expressing this he effects a new experience, creates a new object or experience as well as/..



as expressing the previous intention or insight. In the same way a religious act or symbol is or can be a creative activity. This seems to be part of the meaning of the distinction between static and dynamic religion. It was seen in the previous chapter that the images born of the myth-making function re-affirm and strengthen a sense of the significance of human life in the face of the threat of death and meaninglessness. This is an essential function of religion, but it is not the only one. There are also religious acts and images which are born of intuition. The important point here is that these images are not to be interpreted merely as expressive. This they are, as was seen in the hortatory and "cognitive" roles of models. But they are also heuristic, and even more, they are creative. The expression of a religious intuition or experience takes the religious man beyond the original motivating experience and into a new one.

The analogy is not only with artistic creation but with personal experience. We speak significantly of "making" love with reference to the acts and images of sexual love. But whether the love which is "made" is sexual, or the saints' words of comfort and binding up of wounds, these acts and images are not only expressive, but creative of a new relationship and experience.

It is this creative function which is implicit for instance in the Christian teaching that the significance of a sacrament does not lie wholly in the past, either as a memorial of a past event or as the reliving of a past experience. It is also constitutive of a new reality, it is the presence of Christ, it is the grace of salvation. The symbol or image of a sacrament raises strictly theological questions, which cannot be examined here. But however much the theologians may wish to insist that it is God alone who gives himself, this cannot be interpreted in/..

in such a way as to make man a dummy who never does, i.e. creates, anything. The believer may wish to say that neither he nor the community of believers create even their own lives which are part of the total interpretation which is the object of faith. But "I live, yet not I, but Christ" is one more theological model, which is not normative in the sense that it can stand alone. Or better, if this sentence alone does succeed in provoking a disclosure, it does so only because it contains already that diversity of imagery which is essential if a model is not to be merely a picture, but to point beyond itself. "Christ liveth in me" by itself is a picturing model which might be translated as "I am an automaton". Coupled with "I live", which is to say I act, endure, create, it succeeds in provoking the creative disclosure of the "paradox of grace".

We may close this section then by summing up Bergson's contribution to the analysis of religious and theological language and imagery. This language has first a second-order function, as was noted first in connection with static religion.<sup>661</sup> It is the conceptual or symbolic expression of a primary religious experience and life. It is difficult here to disentangle the fantasies of the myth-making functions, which are rooted in a reaction to the fear of death or meaninglessness, from the dialectic of concept and image by which hortatory and cognitive models seek to give expression to an intuition or disclosure. Perhaps they cannot be separated. Bergson certainly, for whom religion is an "intuition about life" and not an intuition of a personal presence, offers no criteria for distinguishing these in experience, however much he wishes to do so in analysis.

But Bergson's main contribution is to show that religious and theological language is not restricted to this second-order, expressive function. /..

function. Viewed as total interpretation, theology is also the re-ordering of reality by creative imagination. It is therefore also discovery and even creation and not only the interpretation of what is already given. It is to show how this is so that Bergson appeals to active mysticism as the paradigm case of religious faith. Through the model of the mystic we see that ultimately a total interpretation of the meaning of life, or the meaning of God's love, cannot be expressed but only created; that expression and creation come together in the image or constellation of images which is his whole life of active love. This is the paradigm through which we are to interpret the creative function of theological images, whether spoken or acted. Few men are mystics, perhaps very little religious language and action is creative in this sense. But even if theology is seen as second-order, as having the primarily defensive role of protecting a certain experience from wrong interpretation, and even if religious action is seen first as the following of rules, none the less within the life of the believing community, in its preaching, teaching, and action, there are preserved the spoken and acted models which can point to the understanding of reality from which springs creative religious life. This is what Bergson means when he speaks of static and dynamic religion as being "mutually cause and effect".<sup>662</sup> Static and dynamic religion are never found in their "pure" state, but this disjunction is itself a model which gives insight into the nature of religious experience and expression.

#### I.6 - Conclusion

It is difficult to sum up the value of Bergson's work for philosophy of religion. Of particular interest is his whole conception of philosophic method, and his application of it to the problem of religion. His emphasis/..

emphasis on the immediate experience of the self as enduring and creative, his distinctions between intelligence and intuition, concept and image, yield insights which, though as has been noted, he did not fully work them out, are still full of interest for the study of religion.

On the problem of religion itself, one of the most valuable features of Bergson's treatment is its realism. This may seem surprising in view of the air of unreality that hangs about the sharp distinctions between the quasi-instinctive organic conception of static religion and the inexpressible mystical union of dynamic religion. But these, as has been said, are directions of the living reality of religious life, which is to be understood as lying between them.

Bergson anticipates much later thought in the full weight he gives to the sociological, almost causal explanation of religion, while refusing to dismiss it in these terms in the manner of a Freud or a Durkheim. Bergson's treatment shows the unreality of the kind of philosophy of religion which speaks of the positions of the "sceptic" and the "believer" as if these were two clearly distinguishable and well-understood points of view. This he does by going behind the mere assent to or dissent from conceptual formulations to the intuitions or instinctive reactions from which they spring. A theist may not be altogether happy with the statement that religion is an intuition about life and its meaning, but Bergson shows that religion is at least this, and goes a long way in exploring the realities of social life and consciousness which are a necessary part of any statement about the meaning of life and hence of any formulation of religious belief.

The most interesting and potentially valuable particular insight is that which was last discussed. Even when we allow, as Bergson does to the full, for the determining influence of habits of perception and thought/..

thought, and the mechanical influence of social habit, it remains true that the enduring self is essentially creative. "I" am a creator not only of myself but of "my world". Even in these days when so much attention is being paid to the self, to the logical peculiarities of "I" and the insights yielded by them, the enduring creative character of the self's existence does not seem to have received the attention it deserves and which Bergson gives it.

This creativity is only fully understood in the context of the social character of religion remarked on above. The life of the religious community, owing principally, in Bergson's view, to the appearance within it of "privileged souls", is also creative. The symbols and acts and indeed the whole life of the community not only express but help to constitute the reality in which it believes.

These are values of Bergson's method. The content of his examination of religion, as has been indicated in the reference to the "meaning of life", is less satisfactory. The only way of appraising a "total interpretation", as Bergson himself indicates, is by its adequacy to account for all experience. We have noted the value of Bergson's distinction between static and dynamic religion, and the realities to which this distinction points, but it must also be said that he fails to do justice to some of the most characteristic religious experiences, and hence fails to give any intelligible account of the realities to which they claim to point. Among these are the ideas of the numinous; of God as a Person; the experience of sin and guilt; and the reality and depth of the problem of suffering and evil for the religious mind. "Love" itself, the central concept or intuition of dynamic religion, deserves a much deeper analysis than Bergson offers or is able to offer within the limits of his method which he did not develop/..



develop to the point where it could take full account of the meaning of personal existence.

G. Le Roy sums up the characteristic difference between Bergson's philosophy and the Christian total interpretation as a difference of accent - though many would say it was more than this - in that Bergson holds to

"an optimism which knows only joy, while Christianity, for which the salvation of the world is brought about in struggle, first teaches hope." <sup>663</sup>

This remark puts in another way the substance of the main criticism that has been made of Bergson's philosophy of religion. His phenomenological analysis of the creative self-in-the-world, considered in the first three chapters of this thesis, provides at once a critical stand-point and a suggestion of method for an account of all experience. This stand-point, and the method derived from it, which places the self firmly in the world, not as a spectator or knower of a world of "objects", but as a participant in a real creative process is richly suggestive for the philosophy of religion. But in the end Bergson fails to extend his recommended method to the whole field of experience, in particular to the experience of the self-among-other-selves. Religious concepts like sin and salvation, evil and love, however, depend for their meaning on an understanding of the inter-personal relations in which the experiences behind these concepts arise. Without such an understanding, Bergson's intuition, however promising as an element in philosophical method, goes no further than metaphysical "joy" in progress and continuous creation, and does not extend to moral "hope" or the understanding of belief in a personal God.

Bergson's philosophy is however more of a method than a system, and his/..

his insights can be accepted and his method extended to become, as he would recommend, more explicitly "moulded on the real", in this case the reality of the central personal and religious experiences.

## A P P E N D I X I

### NOTES

Quotations from Bergson's works given in the notes are from the following editions :

Time and Free Will - trans. F.L. Pogson (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1910).

Matter and Memory - trans. Paul and Palmer from 5th French edition, (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1911).

Creative Evolution - trans. A. Mitchell (London: MacMillan, 1911).

Mind-Energy - trans. H.W. Carr (London: MacMillan, 1920).

Morality and Religion - trans. Audra and Brereton (London: MacMillan, 1963).

Creative Mind - trans. M.L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946).

After the first mention of each of the above works in the notes, they will be referred to by the following abbreviations :

<u>Time and Free Will</u>	-	T.F.W.
<u>Matter and Memory</u>	-	M.M.
<u>Creative Evolution</u>	-	C.E.
<u>Mind-Energy</u>	-	M.E.
<u>Morality and Religion</u>	-	M.R.
<u>Creative Mind</u>	-	C.M.

Where the original French version is cited, reference will be made to the collected works of Bergson edited by A. Robinet, Henri Bergson: Oeuvres (Paris: P.U.F., 1959).

1. No full biographical study of Bergson has been published. The best sources for details of his life are : Bergson Educateur, by Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide, (P.U.F., Paris, 1955) Part I; and the work of J. Guittou, La Vocation de Bergson, (Gallimard, Paris, 1960).
2. In the year 1927.
3. cf. Article on the origins of Bergson's family by J. Beer, in the Journal de Genève, 16 April 1941, cited in Mossé-Bastide, op. cit., p. 13.
4. Mossé-Bastide, op. cit., p. 31
5. For the details of Bergson's work in the Collège de France, cf. the memorial speech by M. Bataillon at the Collège on the occasion of the Bergson centennial in 1959. Printed in The Bergsonian Heritage, ed. T. Hanna, (Columbia Univ. Press, N.Y., 1962), pp. 107-118.
6. For a list of Bergson's foreign lectureships, cf. Mossé-Bastide, op. cit., pp. 71-73.
7. M. Floris Delattre, Bergson's literary executor, stated at a meeting of the Association des Amis de Bergson in 1948 that no original notes or text existed of these lectures. Summaries of the lectures, planned and revised by Bergson himself, were however published in the Scotsman, and shorter accounts in The Times and the Morning Post. cf. The Scotsman, Edinburgh, April 1 - May 14, 1914. The minutes of the meeting of the Association des Amis de Bergson appear in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. 2, (P.U.F., Paris, 1949), pp. 199ff.
8. cf. Mossé-Bastide op. cit., pp. 102-108; also the remarks of G. Marcel and Gilbert Maire in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. 3, (P.U.F., Paris, 1952), p. 176.
9. Bergson's own account of his diplomatic services was published in Mes Missions, in Hommes et Mondes, July 1947. The text was written by Bergson in 1936.

10. Part II of Mossé-Bastide's work is a study of Bergson's ideas on and influence in education. Chapter VI of the biographical Part I gives the detail of this whole controversy and Bergson's part in it.
11. Mossé-Bastide, op. cit., p. 143. This is also a point developed by H. Sundén, La Théorie Bergsonienne de la Religion, (P.U.F., Paris, 1946), p. 27f.
12. v. infra. Chapter IV, p. 236, 237.
13. Mossé-Bastide, op. cit., p. 14.
14. Avec Henri Bergson, (Gallimard, Paris, 1941).
15. Entretiens avec Bergson, (Plon, Paris, 1959), esp. pp. 271 ff. To Chevalier Bergson said more than once that "nothing separated him from Catholicism", ibid., p. 282.
16. Passages from Bergson's will and last instructions have been made public at different times. That referring to his desire for a Catholic burial was communicated in a letter of Mme Bergson to Emmanuel Mounier, published in the Gazette de Lausanne, 9th September 1941, and also given by Floris Delattre, in Les Dernières Années de Bergson (Etudes Bergsoniennes 1942) p. 16.
17. Bergson's instructions in this matter were first revealed by Jean Wahl, another of his executors, during the public examination of the thesis of Mme Mossé-Bastide at the Sorbonne on 15 May 1954. Testament du 8.2.37, avec codicille du 9.5.38. (Le Monde, 19 May 1954).
18. Mossé-Bastide, op. cit., p. 126, cf. also the preface by Edouard Le Roy to Ecrits et Paroles, ed. R.M. Mossé-Bastide, (P.U.F., Paris, 1957).
19. op. cit., note 18, in 3 volumes.
20. art. La Science Française, La Philosophie, in Ecrit et Pardes, Vol. II, p. 424. cf. also, H. Gouhier, Maine de Biran et Bergson, in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. I, (P.U.F., Paris, 1948).
21. I. Benrubi, Les Sources et les Courants de la Philosophie Contemporaine en France, (Alcan, Paris, 1933) Vol. II (Bergson, pp. 741-824).



22. In a letter to Benrubi, quoted p. 741, op. cit.
23. H. Gouhier, Bergson et le Christ des Evangiles, (Fayard, Paris, 1961) Chapter I, traces the immediate influence of Lachelier and Ravaisson on Bergson. cf. also Bergson's essay, The Life and Work of Ravaisson, in Creative Mind.
24. cf. esp. Creative Evolution, pp. 331-347 and the first part of the Introduction to Creative Mind on Plato and Aristotle. Also F. Fabre-Luce, Bergson, Lecteur de Kant, in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. V, and the recent full-length study by M. Barthélemy-Madaule, Bergson, Adversaire de Kant, (P.U.F., Paris, 1966).
25. It was to these three philosophers that Bergson devoted his lectures in the history of philosophy during his time at the Collège de France. On one occasion, however, he remarked that the only philosophers to whom he was certain of a profound obligation were "Plotinus, Maine de Biran, and somewhat to Ravaisson". Reported by Gilbert Maire, in Bergson mon Maître, (Grasset, Paris, 1935), p. 222. In the essay on Philosophical Intuition, in Creative Mind, Bergson speaks also of his years of study of Spinoza and Berkeley and of how this study helped him to see that the work of a great philosopher springs from a single intuition, which all of his writing elaborates.
26. R.M. Mossé-Bastide, Bergson Educateur, p. 45, recalls an occasion when Bergson was genuinely afraid that the reply by one of his followers, M. Dolléans, to an attack by Julien Benda might provoke a challenge to a duel. Bergson, who had been something of a swordsman in his youth, was ready in this case to meet Benda himself.
27. In a letter to William James, who had asked for biographical details in view of a lecture he was preparing on Bergson and his work. Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. II, pp. 294-5.
28. ibid., p. 294.
29. Letter to G. Papini, Ecrits et Paroles", Vol. I, p. 204.
30. Bergson insists in a letter to Höfdding that it is the "discovery" of duration that is fundamental and not the method of intuition, which is a much later development. Letter printed as an appendix in H. Höfdding, La Philosophie de Bergson, (Alcan, Paris, 1916), p. 161.

31. Taine is not mentioned in the Essai, but it was through him chiefly that the associationism of J.S. Mill had become well-known in France. Bergson couples their names in the criticism of associationism in the Introduction to Metaphysics. Creative Mind, p. 202f.
32. C.M. pp. 227ff.
33. Ibid., p. 233
34. Ibid., p. 190.
35. I. Alexander, Bergson, Philosopher of Reflection (Bowes and Bowes, London, 1957), p. 7-8.
36. Bergson is reported to have told Jacques Chevalier that it was he, Chevalier, who had first taught him to see his whole work as moving in the direction of the Catholic faith. J. Chevalier, op. cit., p. 283.
37. Letter to Harald Höffding. Reprinted Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. III, p. 456.
38. The Creative Mind, p. 10.
39. Time and Free Will, pp. xix, xx.
40. N.K. Smith, A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, (MacMillan, London, 1923), pp. 354, 355.
41. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (ed. N.K. Smith), (MacMillan, London, 1929), p. 119.
42. A.D. Lindsay, The Philosophy of Bergson, (Dent, London, 1911), p. 61.
43. op. cit., p. 65.
44. W. James, Principles of Psychology, (MacMillan, London, 1901), Vol. 2, esp. p. 26ff.
45. T.F.W., p. 24.
46. Ibid., p. 26.
47. Ibid., p. 56.
48. Delboeuf, Eléments de Psychophysique, (Paris, 1883), p. 61, 69.
49. T.F.W., p. 70.
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50. Ibid., p. 72.
51. Ibid., p. 73.
52. Ibid., p. 79.
53. Ibid., p. 95.
54. Ibid., p. 81.
55. Ibid., p. 100.
56. Ibid., pp. 100-101.
57. Ibid., p. 106.
58. Ibid., p. 108.
59. Ibid., p. 110.
60. Ibid., p. 116.
61. Ibid., p. 120.
62. J.S. Mill, Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, (5th Ed.), (London, 1871), p. 580.
63. T.F.W., p. 181.
64. Ibid., p. 183.
65. Ibid., p. 200.
66. Ibid., p. 219.
67. Brain and Thought. A philosophical illusion (Mind-Energy, pp. 189-211).
68. Bergson, Letters to A.O. Lovejoy. Published (in part) in The Reason, the Understanding and Time, (Baltimore, 1961), Appendix p. 185ff.
69. Ibid., p. 186.
70. Ibid., p. 188.
71. A.O. Lovejoy, The Reason, the Understanding and Time, p. 190.
72. Ibid., pp. 192-3.
73. Ibid., p. 185.
74. T.F.W., p. 132.
75. Proc. Arist. Soc., Vol. XVI, 1955-56, pp. 63-83.
- 76./..

76. D.W. Hamlyn, op. cit., pp. 73-4.
77. Ibid., p. 75.
78. Ibid., p. 75.
79. T.F.W., pp. 165-166.
80. Ibid., p. 219.
81. Introduction to Metaphysics (C.M.), pp. 16-17.
82. e.g. A. Ushenko, Zeno's Paradoxes, Mind, 1946, Vol. 55, April, pp. 151-165.  
       M. Lazerowitz, The Paradoxes of Motion, Proc. Arist. Soc., Vol. LII (1951-52), pp. 261-280.  
       P.C. Jones, Achilles and the Tortoise, Mind, 1964, Vol. 55, October, pp. 341-345.  
       G. Ryle, Dilemmas, (Cambridge Univ. Press, London, 1954), pp. 36-53.  
       M. Black, Problems of Analysis, (London, 1954), p. 95 ff.  
       H.R. King, Aristotle and the Paradoxes of Zeno, Journal of Philosophy, No. 46, (1949).
83. G. Ryle, Dilemmas, p. 36.
84. T.F.W., pp. 112-113.
85. C.E., p. 328.
86. The Perception of Change, C.M., p. 170.
87. A. Ushenko, Mind, 1946, p. 164 n.
88. M. Lazerowitz, Proc. Arist. Soc., Vol. LII (1951-2), pp. 261-280.
89. G. Ryle, Dilemmas, pp. 35-53.
90. P.C. Jones, Mind, Vol. 55 (1946), pp. 341-345.
91. G. Ryle, Dilemmas, p. 40.
92. Ibid., p. 51.
93. Ibid., p. 44.
94. The Perception of Change, C.M., p. 171.
95. M. Lazerowitz, op. cit., p. 275ff.
- 96./..

96. Letter to W. James, in Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. 2, p. 294.
97. T.F.W., p. 108.
98. Ibid., p. 95.
99. Ibid., p. 96.
100. M.M., p. 293.
101. Ibid., p. 289.
102. A.D. Lindsay, op. cit., p. 139.
103. Introduction to Metaphysics, C.M., p. 191.
104. C.E., p. 49.
105. The Perception of Change, C.M., p. 176.
106. Letter to Harald Höffding, Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. 3, p. 456.
107. Philosophical Intuition, C.M., p. 130.
108. p. I; cf. note 2. See also letter to Papini, Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. I, p. 204, and the letter to the director of the Revue Philosophique, Vol. II, p. 238ff, esp. p. 240.
109. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 239.
110. M.M., Introd., p. X.
111. Ibid., p. XIII.
112. Ibid., Chapter I, p. I.
113. Ibid., pp. VII - VIII.
114. Ibid., Chapter I, p. I.
115. Ibid., p. I - 2.
116. Ibid., p. 14.
117. Ibid., p. 16.
118. Ibid., p. 17.
119. Ibid., p. 18.
120. Ibid., p. 19.
121. Ibid., p. 20.
122. Ibid., p. 21.
123. Ibid., p. 21.
124. /..



124. Ibid., p. 26.
125. Ibid., p. 31.
126. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
127. Ibid., p. 34.
128. Ibid., p. 67.
129. Ibid., p. 69.
130. Ibid., p. 71.
131. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
132. Ibid., p. 73.
133. Ibid., p. 74.
134. Ibid., p. 78.
135. Ibid., p. 80.
136. Ibid., p. 77.
137. M.M., Introd., p. VII.
138. e.g. Husserl, Méditations Cartésiennes, p. 33. Passage quoted and discussed in D.W. Hamlyn, Sensation and Perception, (Routledge, London, 1961), p. 182.
139. cf. e.g. M. Wertheimer, The General Theoretical Situation, in W.D. Ellis (ed.) A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology (Harcourt, New York, 1938), Chapter 2 for a brief statement of this point of view.
140. M.M., p. 47.
141. Ibid., p. 53.
142. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
143. Ibid., p. 60.
144. D.W. Hamlyn, in Sensation and Perception, Chapter 8, gives a brief account of the theories, stemming from Hume and Hartley and most clearly set out by J.S. Mill and Alexander Bain, which Bergson was most concerned to refute.
145. James J. Gibson, The Perception of the Visual World (Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1950).
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146. Ibid., p. 186.
147. e.g. D.W. Hamlyn, The Psychology of Perception, (Routledge, London, 1957), Chapter V; H.H. Price, review of Gibson's The Perception of the Visual World, Mind, Vol. 62, 1953, pp. 406-410.
148. Art. Perception as a Function of Stimulation, in Psychology; a Study of a Science, ed. S. Koch (McGraw Hill, New York, 1959) pp. 456-501.
149. Ibid., p. 457.
150. Ibid., p. 465.
151. Ibid., p. 460.
152. e.g. As in the account of his philosophy given by Russell, History of Western Philosophy, (Allen and Unwin, London, 1955), pp. 756-765, where Bergson's philosophy is summed up as "irrationalism", p. 756, and his basic argument about duration said to rest on the most "elementary confusion", p. 764.
153. Series I, The Self as Agent (Faber, London, 1957). Series II, Persons in Relation (Faber, London, 1961). See also The Boundaries of Science (Faber, London, 1936) and Interpreting the Universe (Faber, London, 1933).
154. The Self as Agent, p. 104.
155. Ibid., p. 85.
156. See esp. pp. 30-32; 56.
157. A.Thibaudet, Trente Ans de Vie Française, Vol. III, Le Bergsonisme (N.R.F., Paris, 1923), p. 96.
158. M.M., Introd., p. XII.
159. G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, (Hutchinson, London, 1949), Chapter VIII, Sect. 7.
160. M.M., Chapter II, p. 90.
161. Ibid., p. 91.
162. Ibid., p. 92.
163. Ibid., p. 111.
164. Ibid., p. 113.
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165. Given in Wilbrand, Seelenblindheit als Herderscheinung (Wiesbaden, 1887), p. 56, quoted M.M., p. 108.
166. M.M., p. 110.
167. Ibid., p. 124.
168. Ibid., p. 125.
169. Ibid., pp. 110-111.
170. F.C. Bartlett, Remembering, 2nd Ed. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1950), p. 187.
171. M.M., pp. 132-133.
172. cf. H. Head, Aphasia and Kindred Disorders of Speech (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926), esp. Chapters 2 and 4 for a history of the theory of cerebral localization in relation to aphasia.
173. Head, op. cit., p. 84.
174. cf. D.W. Hamlyn, Sensation and Perception, Chapter 7; and Head, op. cit., Chapter VII, for an account of the influence of associationism on the interpretation of physiological data.
175. R. Mourgue, Le Point de Vue Neuro-Biologique dans l'oeuvre de M. Bergson et les Données Actuelles de la Science, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, (Jan-March 1920).
176. Published in Brain, 1915, cf. Head, op. cit., pp. 30-31.
177. H. Jackson, Aphasia in Brain, 1915. quoted in Head, op. cit., pp. 50-57.
178. Head, ibid., p. 38.
179. Jackson, op. cit., quoted Head, p. 42, not underlined in text.
180. Ibid., p. 48.
181. M.M., Introd., p. XIII.
182. M.M., p. 158.
183. Ibid., pp. 170-171.
184. Ibid., p. 181.
185. Ibid., p. 195.
186. v. supra, p. 88.
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187. cf. e.g. Gibson, op. cit., on the "texture of the optical array".
188. cf. e.g. D.O. Hebb, The Organisation of Behaviour (Wiley, New York, 1949).
189. cf. H.H. Price, Thinking and Experience, (Hutchinson, London, 1953) Chapter I for a discussion which, though avoiding traditional terminology, demonstrates this in some detail.
190. M.M., p. 207.
191. Ibid., pp. 208-209.
192. Ibid., p. 211.
193. Ibid., p. 321.
194. Ibid., p. 215.
195. Ibid., p. 226.
196. Ibid., p. 233.
197. Ibid., p. 234.
198. Ibid., pp. 241-242.
199. Ibid., p. 259.
200. Ibid., p. 265.
201. Ibid., p. 268.
202. Ibid., p. 277.
203. Ibid., p. 280.
204. Ibid., p. 244.
205. Ibid., p. 289.
206. cf. Chapter I, pp. 23ff.
207. M.M., p. 77, p. 294.
208. Ibid., pp. 295-296.
209. Ibid., p. 329.
210. V. Jankélévitch, Henri Bergson, (Alcan, Paris, 1959), pp. 80-96 and A. Thibaudet, op. cit., book II, pp. 83-112, generally acknowledged to be the best of Bergson's French expositors, largely restated his position in his own terminology with its ambiguities. A.D. Lindsay, op. cit., the most lucid commentator of Bergson in English, prefers to ignore this section altogether.

- 211. M.M., p. 106.
- 212. Ibid., p. 296.
- 213. Ibid., p. of p. 70-77 below.
- 214. M.M., p. 31.
- 215. G.F. Stout, Mind and Matter, Gifford Lectures (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1921), pp. 308-309.
- 216. I. Alexander, Bergson, (Bowes and Bowes, London, 1957), p. 7.
- 217. Stout, op. cit., pp. 67-68.
- 218. G.N.A. Vesey, The Embodied Mind, (Allen and Unwin, London, 1965).
- 219. M.M., p. 67.
- 220. M. Merleau-Ponty, The Structure of Behaviour, (Methuen, London, 1942), pp. 162-3.
- 221. G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 273.
- 222. Ibid., Chapter II.
- 223. C.M., p. 88.
- 224. M.M., p. 215.
- 225. Ibid., p. 20.
- 226. B. Russell, The Analysis of Mind (Allen & Unwin, London, 1921), Lecture IX.
- 227. E.J. Furlong, A Study in Memory, (Nelson, London, 1951), p. 95.
- 228. Ibid., p. 105.
- 229. G.E. Moore, A Defence of Common Sense. Contemporary British Philosophy, 2nd Series (ed. J.H. Muirhead, London 1924-5).
- 230. W. von Leyden, Remembering (London, 1961), pp. 45-46.
- 231. M.M., p. 60.
- 232. e.g. C.E., p. 283 where Bergson refers to his own work as a "philosophy of intuition", cf. also pp. 285, 293.
- 233. C.M., p. 103.
- 234. p. 12.
- 235./..



235. L.H. Husson, in L'Intellectualisme de Bergson. Genèse et Développement de la Notion Bergsonienne de l'Intuition, (P.U.F. Paris, 1947), pp. 3, 4 and 6 cites every use of the word intuition in Time and Free Will, and Matter and Memory. This book, in which footnotes occupy more space than the text, constitutes a kind of card-index with commentary, on every occasion of Bergson's use of the words intuition and intelligence and their cognates.
236. C.M., p. 33.
237. Husson, L'Intellectualisme de Bergson, p. 6.
238. Ibid., p. 8.
239. C.M., pp. 33-35.
240. C.M., p. 190.
241. C.E., Introduction, pp. IX - X.
242. C.E., p. 210.
243. C.M., pp. 222ff.
244. Ibid., p. 222.
245. Ibid., p. 222.
246. Ibid., p. 223.
247. Ibid., pp. 223-224.
248. Ibid., p. 224.
249. Ibid., p. 226.
250. Ibid., pp. 227-8.
251. Ibid., pp. 228-229.
252. Ibid., pp. 231-232.
253. Ibid., p. 232.
254. Ecrits et Paroles, Book I, pp. 158-159.
255. C.E., pp. 376-383.
256. C.M., p. 233.
257. M.M., Chapter IV, esp. p. 245, 246f.
258. Husson, op. cit., p. 41.
- 259./..

259. C.M., pp. 199-203.
260. Letters of Bergson to Professor H.M. Kallen, referring to Kallen's book William James and Henri Bergson (Chicago, 1914). An extract from the letter was printed in the Journal of Philosophy, 1915, pp. 615-616.
261. Ecrit et Paroles, Book I, p. 141.
262. Ibid., p. 141.
263. Ibid., p. 142.
264. Ibid., p. 159.
265. Ibid., p. 153.
266. M.M., p. 17, p. 234.
267. C.E., Introd., p. IX.
268. Ibid., pp. XIII-XIV.
269. C.E., p. 8.
270. Ibid., p. 11.
271. Ibid., p. 13.
272. Ibid., p. 21.
273. M. Grene, The Logic of Biology, in The Logic of Personal Knowledge, essays presented to Professor M. Polanyi, (Routledge, London, 1961), p. 195.
274. C.E., p. 39.
275. T.F.W., pp. 165ff.
276. C.E., p. 38.
277. Ibid., p. 41.
278. Ibid., pp. 48-49.
279. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
280. Ibid., pp. 107-108.
281. Ibid., pp. 108-109.
282. Ibid., p. 103.
283. Ibid., p. 111.
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284. Ibid., p. 112.
285. Ibid., p. 123.
286. Ibid., p. 142.
287. Ibid., p. 143.
288. Ibid., p. 126.
289. Ibid., p. 151.
290. Ibid., p. 153.
291. Ibid., pp. 153-154.
292. Ibid., p. 156.
293. Ibid., pp. 184-185.
294. Ibid., p. 186.
295. Ibid., p. 201.
296. Ibid., pp. 210-211.
297. Ibid., p. 219.
298. Ibid., p. 198.
299. Ibid., p. 250.
300. Ibid., p. 261.
301. Ibid., p. 264.
302. Ibid., pp. 263; 264.
303. Ibid., pp. 260; 267.
304. Ibid., p. 272.
305. Ibid., p. 261.
306. Ibid., p. 262.
307. Ibid., p. 271.
308. Ibid., p. 275.
309. Ibid., p. 278.
310. Ibid., pp. 277-278.
311. Ibid., pp. 280-281.
312. Ibid., p. 282.
- 313./..

313. Ibid., p. 251.
314. C.M., p. 147.
315. C.E., p. 202.
316. C.M., p. 227.
317. C.E., p. 252.
318. C.M., p. 246.
319. C.E., pp. 285-286.
320. cf. Chapter II above, p. 996.
321. C.M., p. 90.
322. Ibid., pp. 65-71.
323. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
324. C.E., p. 169.
325. Ibid., p. 228.
326. A.D. Lindsay, The Philosophy of Bergson, p. 226.
327. C.E., pp. 168-169.
328. C.M., p. 225.
329. Ibid., p. 191.
330. p. 173-173, 176 ff. above.
331. C.E., p. 272.
332. C.M., p. 195.
333. Ibid., p. 49.
334. Ibid., p. 34.
335. Ibid., p. 35.
336. Ibid., pp. 84-88.
337. Ibid., p. 88.
338. First published in November 1930 in Swedish in the review Nordisk, Tidskrift, reprinted in Creative Mind.
339. pp. 146ff. above.
340. cf. M. Polanyi, op. cit. and also the impressive bibliography in A. Koestler, The Act of Creation (Hutchinson, London, 1964).
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341. L. von Bertalanffy, Problems of Life (Harper, New York, 1952), p. 17.
342. Ibid., p. 9.
343. e.g. In History of Philosophical Systems, ed. V. Ferm (Rider, New York, 1950). art. Vitalism, by A. Berndtson, pp. 375-387.
344. C.E., p. 44, note.
345. cf. M. Polanyi, Personal Knowledge (Routledge, London, 1958), pp. 338-340 for a discussion of Driesch's work on morphogenetic regulations.
346. C.E., p. 45.
347. Ibid., p. 46.
348. M. Polanyi, op. cit., pp. 33-48.
349. C.E., p. 219.
350. J. MacMurray, Interpreting the Universe, p. 106.
351. C.E., p. 271.
352. cf. Chapter II above, pp. 112ff.
353. C.E., p. 265.
354. Ibid., pp. 272; 284.
355. M.E., pp. 22; 23.
356. C.E., p. 275.
357. Vladimir Jankélévitch, Henri Bergson, p. 174.
358. cf. esp. Philosophical Intuition and The Perception of Change in Creative Mind.
359. C.E., pp. 202-204.
360. C.M., p. 147ff.
361. Henri Gouhier, Bergson et le Christ des Evangiles (Fayard, Paris, 1961), pp. 124-134.
362. C.M., p. 221.
363. C.E., p. 262.
364. Gouhier, op. cit., p. 126f.
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365. J. de Tonquédec, M. Bergson est-il Moniste? Etudes religieuses, et littéraires, par des Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus, Janv.-Mars, 1912.
366. Gouhier, op. cit., p. 119.
367. C.E., p. 250.
368. Jankélévitch, op. cit., p. 173.
369. C.E., p. 208.
370. Ibid., p. 174.
371. C.M., p. 49.
372. C.E., pp. 242-243.
373. C.M., p. 35.
374. Jacques Chevalier, Entretiens avec Bergson (Plon, Paris, 1959) pp. 57-58.
375. cf. Chapter II above, pp. 60ff.
376. J. MacMurray, The Self as Agent, esp. Chapter 4, pp. 84ff.
377. Chapter I, The Universe in Immediate Experience, pp. 7-36, and Chapter II, Thought as Symbolic Interpretation.
378. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
379. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
380. Chapter II, above, p. 63f.
381. J. MacMurray, The Self as Agent, p. 100.
382. M.M., p. 240f. cf. Also Révue de Métaphysique et de Morale, p. 325, 1901 on the "illusion created by the exercise of corporal life".
383. Chapter II, above p. 106f.
384. p. 204 above, note 367.
385. C.E., p. 153.
386. cf. Interpreting the Universe, p. 12; The Self as Agent, pp. 8, 9.
387. cf. The bibliography in R.-M. Mossé-Bastide, Bergson Educateur, and the articles in Bergson centenary volumes such as Bergson et Nous (Colin, Paris, 1959) and The Bergsonian Heritage, ed. Hanna, (Columbia, N.Y., 1962).

388. I. Alexander, Bergson, p. 101.
389. P.F. Strawson, Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics (Methuen, London, 1959), pp. 103-104.
390. Ibid., p. 112
391. Ibid., p. 246.
392. Ibid., p. 102.
393. Ibid., p. 30.
394. Ved Mehta, Fly and Fly-Bottle (Harmondsworth, Middx; Penguin Books, 1963), p. 62, attributes this phrase to Strawson himself in a report of a conversation.
395. Strawson, op. cit., pp. 102, 103.
396. The Introduction to Metaphysics appeared first in the Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale for January 1903.
397. C.M., note 27, p. 306.
398. Ibid., note 20, p. 305.
399. C.E., p. 275.
400. Ibid., p. 275.
401. Gouhier, op. cit., p. 107.
402. cf. above, pp. 195ff.
403. cf. above pp. 132-133; and the exposition of the Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 134ff.
404. cf. above, Section I, 5, pp. 176ff.
405. R. Polin, Y ' A-t-il chez Bergson une Philosophie de l'Histoire Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. IV, 1956, pp. 10-40.
406. R. Aron, Note sur Bergson et l'Histoire, Ibid., pp. 45, 46.
407. A.D. Lindsay, The Philosophy of Bergson, p. 241.
408. C.M., pp. 235-236.
409. R. Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography (Routledge, London, 1960).
410. Ibid., p. 182.
411. Ibid., p. 110.
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412. Ibid., p. 193.
413. Ibid., p. 185, p. 194.
414. C.M., p. 182.
415. V. Jankélévitch, Henri Bergson, Foreword to 1959 edition, p. 2.
416. cf. H. Gouhier, Bergson et le Christ des Evangiles, pp. 124-144, for a discussion of the development of Bergson's ideas between the publication of Creative Evolution and that of Morality and Religion.
417. Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. II, pp. 365-366.
418. M.R., pp. 1, 2.
419. Ibid., p. 4.
420. Ibid., p. 10.
421. Ibid., p. 11.
422. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
423. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
424. Ibid., p. 19.
425. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
426. Ibid., p. 22.
427. Ibid., p. 27.
428. Ibid., p. 23.
429. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
430. Ibid., pp. 26-27.
431. Ibid., pp. 45-46.
432. Ibid., p. 28.
433. Ibid., p. 29.
434. Ibid., p. 30.
435. Ibid., p. 35.
436. Ibid., p. 32.
437. Ibid., p. 35.
438. Ibid., pp. 77-78.
439. /..

439. Ibid., pp. 66-68.
440. Ibid., p. 51.
441. Ibid., p. 59.
442. Ibid., p. 63.
443. Ibid., p. 42.
444. Ibid., p. 43.
445. Ibid., p. 43.
446. Ibid., p. 82.
447. David Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, Book III, Sec. I, (ed. Selby-Bigge, Oxford, 1958), p. 469.
448. esp. in Principia Ethica (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1903).
449. M. Warnock, Ethics since 1900 (O.U.P., 1960), p. 203.
450. Mrs P.R. Foot, Moral Beliefs, Proc. Arist. Soc., Vol. LIX, pp. 113-114. cf. also Moral Arguments, Mind, Vol. LXVII, 1958, pp. 504-505.
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452. e.g. H.R. Niebuhr, Radical Monotheism and the West (London, 1961), p. 35, and E. Cassirer, Essay on Man (Yale, 1944), pp. 89, 102-103.
453. in Essays in Moral Philosophy, ed. A.I. Melden (Seattle, 1958), pp. 198-216.
454. Ibid., pp. 215-216.
455. M.R., p. 64.
456. Ibid., p. 50.
457. Ibid., pp. 77-78.
458. Ibid., p. 68.
459. Ibid., p. 81.
460. ed. I.T. Ramsey (S.C.M., London, 1966).
461. Vision and Choice in Morality, in Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, p. 187.
462. Ibid., p. 192.
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463. Ibid., p. 193.
464. Chapter III above pp. 187ff.
465. M.R., p. 219.
466. Ibid., p. 220.
467. R.W. Hepburn, Questions about the Meaning of Life, Religious Studies, Vol. I, No. 2 (Cambridge Univ. Press, London, 1966), pp. 125-140. Hepburn summarizes and discusses other recent studies of this topic.
468. Some of the criteria here are suggested by R.W. Hepburn in the article quoted earlier, Vision and Choice in Morality, Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, p. 190.
469. M.R., p. 83.
470. Talcott Parsons, Introduction to 'Sociology of Religion' by Max Weber (Methuen, London, 1965), p. XXVIII.
471. cf. L. Lévy-Bruhl, Les Fonctions Mentales dans la Société Inférieure (Alcan, Paris, 1910). E. Durkheim, Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, trans. J. Swain (Allen and Unwin, London, 1915).
472. M.R., p. 87.
473. Ibid., pp. 87-88.
474. v. supra, pp. 242f.
475. M.R., pp. 98-99.
476. Ibid., p. 91.
477. Ibid., p. 149.
478. Ibid., p. 101.
479. Ibid., p. 102.
480. Ibid., pp. 107, 109.
481. Ibid., p. 117.
482. Ibid., p. 179.
483. Ibid., pp. 127-128.
484. Ibid., p. 149.
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485. Ibid., p. 170.
486. Ibid., pp. 170-171.
487. Paris, 1922.
488. Theories of Primitive Religion (Clarendon, Oxford, 1965), p. 91.
489. M.R., p. 120.
490. Ibid., p. 121.
491. Ibid., p. 124.
492. For a discussion of Bergson's source material for Morality and Religion, cf. H. Sundén, La Philosophie Religieuse de Bergson, (P.U.F., Paris, 1946), and B.A. Scharfstein, Roots of Bergson's Philosophy (Columbia Univ. Press, N.Y., 1943), Chapter V.
493. The whole group is discussed in Benrubi, La Philosophie Contemporaine en France, Vol. I (Alcan, Paris, 1933), and also in R.H. Lowie, History of Ethnographical Theory (Holt, Rinehart, Wilson, N.Y., 1937).
494. E. Durkheim, Elementary Forms of Religious Life.
495. Rules of Sociological Method, (Univ. of Chic. Illinois, 1950), esp. Chap. V., Rules for Explanation of Social Facts.
496. esp. Magic Science and Religion (ed. Redfield) (Glencoe Ill., 1948).
497. There is no mention of Malinowski in the works of Sundén and Scharfstein n. 24 supra, and he is not mentioned in the various volumes of memoirs published by Bergson's friends and pupils, but the parallels are striking, and it is chronologically possible and perhaps even likely, that Bergson had read Magic Science and Religion, which was first published in 1925 in Science, Religion and Reality, ed. Joseph Needham (Methuen, London, 1925).
498. Sir J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, first published London, 1890.
499. Magic Science and Religion (Doubleday Anchor Col. 1954), p. 87.
500. E. Evan-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 120.
501. Esp. Sociology of Religion, London 1965. Translated with an Introduction by Talcott Parsons. The translator's Preface and Introduction give a summary of Weber's other works in the field of religion.

502. Ibid., Introduction, pp. XXXIII.
503. Talcott Parsons in his essay, The Theoretical Development of the Sociology of Religion, in Essays in Sociological Theory (Free Press Glencoe Ill., 1954), pp. 197-211; traces this development from the early work of Tylor and Spencer onwards. To illustrate what he calls a notable advance in the adequacy of our theoretical equipment to deal with the phenomenon of religion, he discusses the work of Pareto, Malinowski, Durkheim and Weber. Many of the ideas of the latter three which Parsons regards as their most significant contribution to sociological theory are those we have noted as being at least sketched in Bergson.
504. M.R., p. 83.
505. Divinity and Experience, (Clarendon, Oxford, 1961).
506. Nuer Religion, (Clarendon, Oxford, 1956).
507. The Concept of Prayer (Routledge, London, 1965) cf. also art. Faith, Scepticism and Religious Understanding, in Religion and Understanding, ed. D.Z. Phillips, (Blackwell, Oxford, 1967).
508. The Idea of a Social Science (Routledge, London, 1958).
509. D.Z. Phillips, op. cit., p. 23.
510. Esp. in A. MacIntyre, in Faith and the Philosophers, ed. Hick, (MacMillan, London, 1964), art. Is Understanding Religion Compatible with Believing? pp. 115-133. P. Winch in Religion and Understanding, ed. Phillips; art. Understanding a Primitive Society, pp. 9-42.
511. op. cit., pp. 29-30.
512. Ibid., p. 36.
513. M.R., p. 178.
514. Ibid., p. 179.
515. Ibid., p. 184.
516. Ibid., pp. 186-187
517. Ibid., p. 188.
518. Enneads III: VIII 4, quoted in M.R., p. 189.
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519. M.R., p. 191.
520. Ibid., p. 192.
521. Ibid., p. 192.
522. Ibid., p. 195.
523. Ibid., p. 198.
524. Ibid., p. 203.
525. Ibid., p. 205.
526. Ibid., p. 205.
527. Ibid., p. 200.
528. On the history of the transition from Creative Evolution to Morality and Religion, and of the notions of Creation and love in particular, see H. Gouhier, Bergson et le Christ des Evangiles (Paris 1961), pp. 134-159, and R. Polin, art. Bergson, Philosophe de la Création, in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. 5, 1960, pp. 193-218.
529. E.C. 279.
530. E.C. 283.
531. E.C. p. 139.
532. E.S. p. 25.
533. v. supra, p. 307, M.R., p. 188.
534. M.R., p. 220.
535. Ibid., p. 216.
536. Ibid., p. 219.
537. Ibid., p. 218.
538. Ibid., p. 200.
539. Ibid., p. 218.
540. Not in English text (M.R., p. 218) but in French original. Deux Sources, p. 273 (Robinet, p. 1191).
541. M.R., p. 275.
542. J. Chevalier, Entretiens avec Bergson (Paris, 1959), p. 152.
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543. M.R., p. 206.
544. Ibid., p. 211.
545. Ibid., pp. 209-210.
546. W. James, Varieties of Religious Experience (Modern Library, N.Y.) p. 370., quoted M.R. p. 210.
547. E. Durkheim, Elementary Form of the Religious Life, Chap. V. passim. quoted M.R., p. 208.
548. M.R., p. 225.
549. Ibid., p. 224.
550. Ibid., p. 225.
551. Letter to William James, 6 Jan. 1903, Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. I, p. 192.
552. This is given in reports of conversations relating to the period. cf. Entretien, 21 April 1911, in Bulletin Joseph Lotte, March, 1940, p. 284; quoted in Gouhier, op. cit., p. 140; also A.D. Sertillanges, Avec Henri Bergson (Gallimard, Paris, 1941), pp. 23-24; J. Chevalier, Entretiens avec Bergson, pp. 273-276, 279; J. Wahl, Hommage, reprinted in Hanna, The Bergsonian Heritage, p. 154; I. Benrubi, Souvenirs sur H. Bergson (Neuchâtel, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1942), pp. 48 and 335. Gouhier gives a summary of the development of Bergson's ideas on religion between Creative Evolution and Morality and Religion in Bergson et le Christ des Evangiles, pp. 130-156.
553. Sundén, op. cit., by painstaking research aided by surmise, gives an account of Bergson's reading in the whole field of religion and sociology. L. Adolphe in La Philosophie Religieuse de Bergson (P.U.F., Paris, 1946) traces the possible influence of Hinduism and Taoism; V. Jankélévitch has studied his relation with Judaism in Bergson, in an Appendix; and R.M. Mossé-Bastide, among others, has studied the influence of Plotinus, Bergson et Plotin, (P.U.F., Paris, 1959). These are the main studies of the influence of non-Christian religion and mystical experience on Bergson.
554. v. supra, Chap. III, pp. 223f.
- 555./...

555. The Huxley Memorial Lecture, Univ. of Birmingham, May 29, 1911. Printed in The Hibbert Journal, Vol. X, No. 1, Oct. 1911. Quotation from edition by A. Robinet in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. V., 1960, p. 27.
556. Mind-Energy, (London 1920), pp. 24-25.
557. Which Otto for instance in Mysticism East and West (MacMillan, London, 1932) calls the 'inward way' and the 'mysticism of unifying vision', remarking that though characteristics of both types may be found in a single mystic, yet, 'mystical experience is capable of great diversity. The moods and feelings it arouses can differ from one another even to the extent of being diametrically opposed.' op. cit., p. 39. E. Underhill, in various works, also distinguishes between these types and is followed by W.T. Stace. Mysticism and Philosophy (MacMillan, London, 1961), p. 61ff.
558. Which R.C. Zaehner for example believes to be 'two distinct and mutually opposed types of mysticism'. Mysticism Sacred and Profane, (London 1957), p. 204, though it is difficult to determine if Zaehner really means that the experiences themselves are distinct or only their interpretation.
559. Bergson seems to have been first impressed by the active element in the Christian mystics by the study by H. Delacroix of St. Teresa, Mme Guyon and Suso, Etudes d'Histoire et de Psychologie du Mysticisme, cf. Bergson's report on this work to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in January 1909. Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. II, pp. 313-314. It is a common-place however that the ideas of service and action in the world are widely different as between say Christianity and Hinduism.
560. Expression used to Abbe Magnin. Un Colloquio con H. Bergson, in Rivista di Filosofia Neo-scolastica, 1933, p. 112. Quoted in Gouhier, op. cit., p. 218, Note 30.
561. Given in Floris Delattre, Les Dernières Années d'Henri Bergson in Etudes Bergsoniennes, special no. of Revue Philosophique, March-August 1941.
562. Op. cit., p. 42.
563. M.R., p. 216.
- 564./..



564. Mysticism and Philosophy (MacMillan, London, 1961), Chap. 2, pp. 41-133. cf. esp. pp. 79, 110, 131-132.
565. Ibid., p. 110.
566. M.R., p. 197.
567. Stace, op. cit., p. 79.
568. J. Wach, The Comparative Study of Religion, (Columbia, N.Y., 1958), Chap. II, pp. 27-58.
569. Ibid., p. 30.
570. Ibid., p. 32.
571. Ibid., p. 35.
572. Ibid., p. 36.
573. M.R., p. 197.
574. v. supra, pp. 205ff.
575. Though many people who undergo experiences which if not 'mystical' are at least 'ecstatic' do not believe their lives are significantly affected by these experiences, cf. M. Laski, Ecstasy, (London, 1961) especially the answers to questionnaires.
576. v. supra, section 3, p. 298f.
577. K. Mannheim, Diagnosis of our Time (London, 1943), p. 116. Quoted in M.J. Jackson's introduction to F. Boulard, An Introduction to Religious Sociology (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1960), p. XVII.
578. Even in the largely critical study La Philosophie Bergsonienne, Etudes Critiques (Paris 1930), Maritain acknowledges his great personal debt to Bergson.
579. cf. esp. E. Gilson, Le Philosophe et la Théologie (Fayard, Paris, 1960).
580. cf. esp. G. Marcel, Hommage à Bergson in T. Hanna, The Bergsonian Heritage, (N.Y., 1962), pp. 124-132.
581. On the whole question of the influence of Bergson on de Chardin, see the studies of Madeleine Barthélemy - Madaule. Introduction à la Méthode chez Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin, in Bergson et Nous; Introduction/..

Introduction à un rapprochement entre Henri Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. V (Paris 1960), p. 63ff. and the same author's full-length study, Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin (Seuil, Paris, 1963).

582. J. Pelikan, Bergson and the Theologians, in Hanna, op. cit., pp. 54-73.
583. Ibid., p. 63.
584. Ibid., p. 65.
585. A. Loisy, Y a-t-il Deux Sources de la Religion et de la Morale (2nd ed. Paris, 1934).
586. Pelikan, op. cit., p. 70.
587. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
588. F. Gerald Downing, Has Christianity a Revelation (SCM, London, 1964). On the question of the logical complexity of the concept of revelation, cf. J. McIntyre, The Shape of Christology, (SCM, London, 1966), Chap. 6.
589. M.R., p. 205.
590. Ibid., p. 207.
591. Ibid., p. 225.
592. J.N. Findlay, Can God's Existence be Disproved, Mind, April 1948. Reprinted in The Ontological Argument, ed. A. Plantinga (MacMillan, London, 1968) pp. 111-112. Quotations are from this collected volume. Findlay later changed his mind as to the intelligibility of the idea of necessary existence. While still believing his early article to be 'perfectly correct so far as it goes', he none the less argues in support of Anselm's proofs in his Gifford lectures, esp. second series, The Transcendence of the Cave (Allen & Unwin, London, 1967) pp. 88ff. We are here, however, only concerned with the argument of the early article.
593. Ibid., p. 117.
594. Ibid., p. 119.
595. N. Malcolm argues that Findlay's 'modern view' cannot possibly have 'the implication that every existential proposition must be contingent'. art. Anselm's Ontological Arguments, in Plantinga, op. cit., p. 152.

596. Ibid., p. 119.

597. Creative Evolution, pp. 287-314.

598. Ibid., p. 315.

599. Ibid., p. 294.

600. Ibid., p. 299.

601. The point Bergson is arguing for here is really that givenness of the self-in-the-world which is the fundamental assumption of much phenomenological and existentialist thinking. Bergson's argument introduces a characteristic difference. If it is true that "Nothing is Heidegger's name for the fact that we and things are contingent beings, that we are but might not be", then Bergson could agree also to the use of "Nothing" in this sense. He would not agree however, that one can then go on to ask "Why is there any Being at all - why not far rather Nothing?" (C.B. Daly, Metaphysics and the Limits of Language, in Prospect for Metaphysics, ed. I. Ramsay (Allen & Unwin, London, 1961), p. 190). This is to miss the point of the distinction between the contingency of every existent thing and the contingency of Existence.

602. M. Merleau-Ponty, Hommage à Bergson, in Hanna, op. cit., p. 147.

603. C.E., pp. 314-315.

604. From the article Inconnaissable, 1908. Reprinted in Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. II, p. 303.

605. C.E., p. 8.

606. Ibid., p. 262.

607. The article by de Tonquédec, M. Bergson est-il moniste, in Etudes Religieuses, historiques et littéraires, par des pères de la Compagnie de Jésus, Jan.-March 1912 gives the substance of these criticisms. Bergson's letter of 1908 however was in reply to questions addressed directly to him by de Tonquédec.

608. Letter reprinted in Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. II, p. 296.

609. Ecrits et Paroles, Vol. II, p. 365.

610./..

610. J. de Tonquédec, La Conception Bergsonienne de Dieu, Bergson et Nous, 1959, p. 303; cf. also J. Maritain, La Philosophie Bergsonienne (Paris 1930), esp. part 2, Chap. IV; and Part 3, Chap. I; and T.L. Penido, Dieu dans le Bergsonisme (Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1934) for a critical view of Bergson on this point. For a more favourable interpretation, cf. E. Rideau, Le Dieu de Bergson (Alcan, Paris, 1932) and H. Gouhier op. cit., esp. Chap. IV.
611. C.E., p. 268.
612. Gouhier, op. cit., p. 133.
613. de Tonquédec art. cit. Bergson et Nous, p. 303. J. Maritain, op. cit., part 3, Chap. I. 'Bergsonisme de fait et Bergsonisme d'intention'.
614. C.E., p. 252.
615. v. supra, Chap. 4, p. 271f. cf. also Chap. III, p. 214ff.
616. In addition to the works on Bergson's philosophy of religion as a whole, see also R. Polin, Bergson et le problème du mal, in Les Etudes Bergsoniennes, Vol. III, (Paris 1953) and E. Amado-Lévy-Valensi, Bergson et le Mal, in Bergson et Nous (Paris 1959).
617. C.E., p. 224.
618. Ibid., p. 225.
619. M.R., p. 215.
620. v. supra, Chap. 4, p. 237.
621. v. supra, Chap. III, esp. pp. 207ff.
622. cf. Emergent Evolution (London, 1923), and Life, Mind and Spirit, (London, 1926).
623. cf. Space, Time and Deity (MacMillan, London, 1920).
624. esp. in Process and Reality (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1929).
625. e.g. H.N. Wieman, The Wrestle of Religion with Truth (MacMillan, New York, 1927); The Growth of Religion, with W.M. Horton (Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1938); and C. Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God (Harper, New York, 1941), A Natural Theology for our Time, (Open Court, Chicago, 1968). These authors, among others draw upon Whitehead for the formulation of their conception of God as being involved in one way or another in cosmic process.

626. On this whole question cf. M. Barthélemy-Madaule, Bergson et Teilhard de Chardin (Seuil, Paris, 1963).
627. F. Ferré, in Language, Logic and God (Harper, New York, 1961) and J.A. Martin in The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology (A. & C. Black, London, 1966), provide convenient summaries of much work of this kind, along with analyses of the history of this particular debate in the philosophy of religion.
628. J.A. Martin, op. cit., Chap. 5.
629. R.B. Braithwaite, An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief (Cambridge, 1955).
630. The Secular Meaning of the Gospel (S.C.M., London, 1963).
631. Theology and Falsification, in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, ed. A.G.N. Flew and A. MacIntyre (S.C.M., London, 1955).
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633. e.g. J.A. Hutchison, Language and Faith: Studies in Sign, Symbol and Meaning, (Westminster, Philadelphia, 1963) who makes the distinction between the 'orders' of religious and theological language. cf. also W.F. Zuurdeeg, An Analytical Philosophy of Religion (Abingdon, Nashville, Tenn. 1958) and W. Hordern Speaking of God: The Nature and Purpose of Theological Language (MacMillan, New York, 1964).
634. Van Buren, op. cit., p. 99.
635. I and Thou (T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1937).
636. The difficulties are pointed out by R.W. Hepburn in Christianity and Paradox (Watts, London, 1958) Chaps. III and IV.
637. G.F. Woods, Theological Explanation (Nisbet, Welwyn Herts, 1958).
638. J. Hick, Faith and Knowledge (Cornell, New York, 1957).
639. op. cit., esp. part III, 6 and 7.
640. Ibid., p. 32.
641. J. Wisdom, art. Gods, Proc. Arist. Soc., 1944-1945, pp. 190ff. Reprinted in Wisdom Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis (Blackwell, Oxford, 1953).
- 642./..



642. Hick, op. cit., p. 151.
643. Introduction to Metaphysics, in C.M. pp. 190, 222.
644. C.E., p. 315.
645. J.A. Martin, op. cit., p. 94.
646. M.R., p. 200.
647. v. supra, pp. 229ff.
648. v. supra, pp. 274ff.
649. cf. the discussion of language in Chap. III above, Section I.5, pp. 176ff, where the references to language scattered through various of Bergson's works are considered together.
650. C.E., p. 272.
651. Introduction à la Métaphysique: La Pensée et le Mouvant, p. 210. (Robinet, p. 1399).
652. C.M., p. 195. v. supra, Chap. III, p. 197.
653. C.M., p. 49.
654. I. Ramsey, Models and Mystery (O.U.P., London 1964), p. 1.
655. Ibid., p. 53.
656. The Tacit Dimension (Routledge, London, 1967), p. 79.
657. Christus Victor (S.P.C.K., London, 1931).
658. The Shape of Christology (S.C.M., London, 1966), pp. 70-74.
659. C.M., p. 35.
660. This analogy is interestingly explored by T.R. Martland, An Analogy between Art and Religion, in the Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXIII, No. 18, Sep. 1966, p. 509ff.
661. v. supra, Chap. V, p. 335.
662. M.R., p. 205.
663. G. Le Roy, Pensée Bergsonienne et Christianisme. Bergson et Nous, p. 199.

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L'Evolution Créatrice (Paris: Alcan, 1907), translated by A. Mitchell as Creative Evolution (London: MacMillan, 1911); and

Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion (Paris: Alcan, 1932) translated by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton as Morality and Religion, (London: MacMillan, 1935).

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The best edition of Bergson's works is that edited by A. Robinet, Henri Bergson: Oeuvres (Paris: P.U.F., 1959) in which all the above works are reprinted with an introduction by H. Gouhier, a critical apparatus and historical notes. A full bibliography of Bergson's own works/..

works, with notes of various editions and translations, is to be found in R.-M. Mossé-Bastide, Bergson Educateur, (Paris: P.U.F., 1955) pp. 359-379. Mme Mossé-Bastide has also edited a collection of Bergson's letters and occasional papers, Ecrits et Paroles, (Paris: P.U.F., 1959).

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- (i) A contribution to a bibliography of H. Bergson (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1913).
- (ii) The bibliography given in the Bergson number of the Revue Internationale de Philosophie, Brussels, Vol. 3, No. 10, October, 1949.
- (iii) Bibliographie Générale des Etudes sur le Bergsonisme, in R.-M. Mossé-Bastide, Bergson Educateur (Paris: P.U.F., 1955) pp. 381-448.
- (iv) The bibliography given in G. Mourellos, Bergson et les Niveaux de Réalité, (Paris: P.U.F., 1963) which continues the work of Mme Mossé-Bastide from the year 1952 to 1960.

The researches of Mme Mossé-Bastide and M. Mourellos together constitute a comprehensive Bergson bibliography comprising some 1,700 works.

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